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*Only 21 MPs accounted for such spending*

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## 92 people stuck in West Asia seek State government's help

**The Hindu Bureau**
BENGALURU

**Three legislators are among those believed to be stranded in West Asia**

As many as three legislators are among those believed to be stuck in West Asia with cancellation of flights to Bengaluru and Mangaluru even as the State government is coordinating with the Ministry of External Affairs to bring those stranded back safely.

The State Emergency Operations Centre, which has been receiving calls seeking help, has a list oF 92 people that is constantly getting updated.

While 37 flights to and from Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru were cancelled owing to escalation of tension in West Asia on Sunday, 11 flights to and from Mangalauru International Airport remained cancelled.

The airspace in 11 West Asian countries have been closed till Monday. On Sunday, Karnataka saw protests in multiple places against the U.S.-Israel attack on Iran that killed supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The protests were held at Johnson Market in Bengaluru and Alipur in Chickballapur district, near here. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar have condemned the attack on Iran.

The State government has appointed the Resident Commissioner of Karnataka in Delhi to coordinate with the Ministry of External Affairs to ensure the safe return of Kannadigas stranded in West Asia and requiring help.

# Iran hits Israel, U.S. bases after killing of Khamenei

Iranian authorities say over 200 people have been killed since start of the U.S. and Israeli strikes; U.S. President says he will 'be talking' to Iran leaders, while Israel pledged 'non-stop' strikes

**Associated Press**
**Agence France-Presse**
TEHRAN/DUBAI

A video grab from Israeli military footage shows strikes on what it calls 'headquarters of the Iranian terror regime' in Tehran. AFP

Iran vowed revenge on Sunday after the killing of its Supreme Leader, and traded strikes with Israel as part of a widening war prompted by a U.S. and Israeli bombardment a day earlier.

U.S. President Donald Trump warned that any retaliation would only lead to further escalation. He said he would "be talking" to Iranian leaders but was vague on the timing and noted that much of the country's leadership was dead. "They want to talk, and I have agreed to talk, so I will be talking to them. They should have done it sooner," he was quoted as saying by *The Atlantic*.

Blasts in Tehran sent a huge plume of smoke into the sky in an area where there are government buildings. Iranian state television said that it had been targeted by strikes.

"The technical team is assessing the damage," said the broadcaster.

Iranian authorities say more than 200 people have been killed since the start of the U.S. and Israeli strikes that killed Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and other senior leaders.

Earlier, Iran fired missiles at an ever-widening list of targets in Israel and Gulf Arab states in retaliation while Israel pledged "non-stop" strikes against Iran's leaders and military.

In Israel, loud explosions caused by missile impacts or interceptions could be heard in Tel Aviv.

Israel's rescue services said nine people were killed and 28 wounded in a strike that hit a synagogue in the central town of Beit Shemesh, bringing the overall death toll in the country to 11. The U.S. military said three service members have been killed and five seriously wounded in the Iran operation.

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## Airlines cancel 350 flights; all services to 11 nations suspended

**Jagriti Chandra**
NEW DELHI

Indian airlines cancelled nearly 350 flights on Sunday, with Air India suspending 20 additional long-haul services to European destinations, including London, Zurich, Milan, Frankfurt and Copenhagen.

The cancellations add to the complete suspension of flights by all Indian carriers to 11 countries in West Asia, following air strikes in the region in the wake of the war between Israel-U.S. and Iran and an urgent advisory issued by the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation valid until March 2. Air India on Sunday announced 20 additional flight cancellations across Europe, taking the total number of its long-haul and ultra-long-haul services, over and above the Gulf flights, scrapped for the day to 48. This includes 28 earlier cancellations affecting routes to the U.S., Canada and Europe.

The UAE's aviation regulator announced that the state would cover all accommodation and sustenance costs for the stranded passengers, ensuring continued provision of essential services, according to *Khaleej Times*.

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### Indians among those injured in Iranian strikes

NEW DELHI
Several Indians were among those who have been injured in the missile and drone attacks by Iran in West Asia, authorities in the UAE and Oman said. Indian missions heightened activities to address concerns of citizens scattered across West Asia. » PAGE 9

## Flight operations hit in Bengaluru, Mangaluru airports; 61 flights cancelled

WEST ASIA CONFLICT

**The Hindu Bureau**
BENGALURU/MANGALURU

Passengers stranded at Kempegowda International Airport amid flight disruptions and cancellations due to the situation in West Asia, in Bengaluru. ANI

Owing to the escalating tension in the West Asia region, flight services from Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) and the Mangaluru International Airport (MIA) were disrupted on Sunday.

The Bangalore International Airport Ltd. (BIAL) which operates the KIA, said that 50 flights were cancelled till 6 p.m.

"Due to airspace restriction on March 1, 22 arrivals and 28 departures have been cancelled," a BIAL spokesperson said.

The key sectors to which flight services were affected include Abu Dhabi, Riyadh, Jeddah, Dammam, Dubai, and Doha. Dubai and Abu Dhabi are the top two international destinations from KIA.

Several airlines have already suspended flight operations to West Asia because of the ongoing tensions.

BIAL officials said that flight operations to Europe were largely normal. "Due to the evolving situation in parts of the Middle East, some international flights are experiencing schedule changes. Passengers are advised to check the latest flight status with their respective airlines before proceeding to KIA. To support passengers, a dedicated help desk is being set up at the Kerbside (Level 3) of Terminal 2 to assist travellers with information and guidance. We are closely monitoring the situation in coordination with airlines and relevant authorities to ensure smooth passenger movement and minimise inconvenience," said a passenger advisory issued by KIA.

At the MIA, a total of 11 flights were cancelled on Sunday. The key sectors to which flight services were affected were Jeddah, Muscat, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Bahrain. Many flights on these sectors have also been cancelled on March 2 and 3.

RELATED REPORTS ON » PAGE 4

## *Festive colours*

**Gearing up:** A vendor sells colours in a market ahead of Holi, in Kolkata on Sunday. The festival will be celebrated on Wednesday. ANI

NEARBY

### GBA, BDA to draft separate Revised Master Plans

BENGALURU
Efforts to draw up a Revised Master Plan - 2041 by the Bangalore Development Authority have been hit with the Greater Bengaluru Governance Act, 2024, which makes Greater Bengaluru Authority the Local Planning Authority for the GBA area of 712 sq. km. » PAGE 3

EDUCATIONPLUS » PAGE 15

## At least 18 killed, 20 injured in blast at Nagpur factory

**The Hindu Bureau**
MUMBAI

**Tragic incident:** Rescue personnel at the site of the blast in Nagpur district on Sunday. PTI

At least 18 people were killed and over 20 injured in an explosion at an ammunition manufacturing company in Raulgaon village of Nagpur district in Maharashtra on Sunday.

"Over 20 people are injured and have been shifted to nearby hospitals as well as Orange City Hospital. The bodies are yet to be identified. So far, 18 people were killed," Nagpur Rural Superintendent of Police Harssh Poddar told *The Hindu*, adding that the cause of the blast is yet to be ascertained.

The explosion occurred around 7.30 a.m. in the packing area of a factory owned by SBL Energy Limited, a mining and industrial explosives manufacturer, according to police officials. The police have filed an accidental death report and will register an FIR after a preliminary probe. The PMO has announced aid for the families of the deceased.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 8

## A map to guide you to places in Bengaluru where pink Tabebuia trees are in full bloom

**Darshan Devaiah B.P.**
BENGALURU

Spotting a Tabebuia tree in full bloom, Faris Mohammed wished for a tracker similar to Japan's extensive cherry blossom forecasts and festivals. PTI

As Bengaluru turns into a blush-tinted canvas this season, a city-based techie has ensured that residents no longer have to rely on chance sightings to experience the spectacle. Faris Mohammed, a lead product designer at a Bengaluru-based agentic analytics company, has launched an interactive website www.blrbloom.com that tracks neighbourhoods where pink Tabebuia trees are in full bloom.

Originally from Malappuram in Kerala and a Bengalurean for nearly a decade, Mr. Mohammed describes the project as a hobby that quickly grew into something larger. "Every year, we have this beautiful pink blossom season, but there was no single place to know exactly where and when it was happening," he told *The Hindu*.

The idea first struck him on a traffic-clogged evening along Outer Ring Road (ORR). Spotting a Tabebuia tree in full bloom, he wished for a tracker similar to Japan's extensive cherry blossom forecasts and festivals. "Sometimes I would notice blooms on my way to the office, but later could not recall the exact location. I felt it would be nice to create something that helps people find them easily," he said.

Built in less than four days for its initial version, the platform was first populated with curated bloom spots. A turning point came when Mr. Mohammed discovered the Greater Bengaluru Authority's (GBA) tree census data via OpenCity's website.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 5

# From the valley to the pinnacle of domestic cricket — the J & K story

Jammu & Kashmir's stellar run is a tale of grit, determination and meticulous preparation; it had all bases covered and every member of the squad put his hand up when it mattered most; the next challenge for Dogra's men will be to sustain the momentum and stay at the summit

**Tarun Shastry**

K. MURALI KUMAR

The location: absolutely picturesque. The people: warm and cordial. The culture: vibrant. But that's precisely where the niceties dissolve. Confront them on an unforgiving 22-yard strip, and the warmth hardens into will, the smiles fade into steely stare-downs.

Ask domestic powerhouse and 42-time champion Mumbai. Ask two-time titleholder Rajasthan. Ask two-time winner Hyderabad. Ask five-time titlist Madhya Pradesh. Ask former title holder, Bengal. Now include eight-time powerhouse Karnataka.

Each will narrate a different battle. Different sessions seized. Defining moments wrested away. Yet the conclusion remains chillingly consistent – Jammu and Kashmir are fierce, relentless, and unapologetically serious about their craft. Now perched at the summit of the nation's premier red-ball competition – the Ranji Trophy – they stand tall, composed, and commanding after overpowering Karnataka's celebrated batting unit in the final. From the valleys to the pinnacle of Indian domestic cricket, they have earned their place at the top. Every remarkable journey needs heroes – and for J & K, they have come in numbers. Meet the protagonists. The men on the field, and just as importantly off it, who have crafted this story to near perfection.

**Auqib Nabi:** *The Baramulla Express* has been central to J & K's historic triumph. Over the past two seasons, 2024-25 and 2025-26, he has derailed one side after another, establishing himself as the spearhead of a team that had never previously reached the top four in any competition.

He hasn't merely been effective; he has transformed J & K's bowling identity. In the final at Hubballi, Nabi rose to the grandest stage. He dismissed accomplished Test batters K.L. Rahul and Karun Nair with deliveries of the highest quality – both pitched on a probing length, kissed the seam, and shaped away just enough. Rahul could only feather a faint edge, while Nair's furniture disturbed as he stood momentarily stunned. Nabi wasn't done. He went on to claim three more wickets, including the home side's lone centurion, Mayank Agarwal and leading run-scorer R. Smaran, effectively breaking the backbone of Karnataka's resistance.

This season, Nabi finished as the leading wicket-taker with 60 scalps. Across the two campaigns combined, he has amassed a staggering 104 wickets. In this period, he has registered 13 five-wicket hauls in just 18 matches. He became the first J & K bowler to claim 50-plus wickets in a single Ranji season and the first from the state to top the tournament's bowling charts. Notably, he had already set a benchmark the previous year with 44 wickets.

In 2025-26 alone, Nabi recorded eight five-wicket hauls – the joint-most by any pacer in a first-class season in India. Only Maurice Tate (1926-27) and Ron Oxenham (1935-36) have matched that mark.

Such sustained excellence has inevitably sparked widespread clamour from stalwarts of the game, calling for his inclusion in the National side – and rightly so.

**Sunil Kumar:** *The Silent Warrior* has provided unwavering support from the other end. The 26-year-old left-arm seamer was a study in control throughout the season, operating with precision, patience and discipline. His ability to land the ball in probing areas, over after over, created the pressure that allowed breakthroughs to follow.

While the spotlight often tilted elsewhere, Sunil's quiet spells squeezed opposition batters into mistakes. He concluded the campaign with 31 wickets, including two five-wicket hauls – numbers that reflect both consistency and craft. Understated in demeanour, Sunil has gone about his work without fanfare. If one end brought the thunder, the other ensured the storm never relented.

**Abdul Samad:** *The Middle-Order Mauler's* immense skill, range, and potential flickered in phases. This season, it burned bright. If J & K had the arsenal to dismantle sides with the ball, they required a pillar with the bat to stack up the runs. Samad answered that call.

Often branded a white-ball player, the 24-year-old reshaped that perception in the recently concluded campaign. His red-ball game displayed maturity, patience, and a willingness to graft – qualities that added depth and assurance to the batting order.

Samad finished as the team's highest run-scorer, amassing 748 runs in 10 matches at an impressive average of 57.53, including a century and five half-centuries. In the final, his composed 61 off 104 deliveries played a crucial role in powering J & K to a formidable 584.

Beyond the numbers, it was his temperament that stood out. Batting in the middle order, Samad provided stability in testing phases, absorbing pressure and constructing vital partnerships. Whether in the high-stakes final or in knockout clashes against Madhya Pradesh in the quarterfinal and Bengal in the semifinal, he delivered when it mattered most.

**Paras Dogra:** *The Veteran and Leader's* journey in the Ranji Trophy began in 2002. Having represented Himachal Pradesh and Puducherry over a career spanning more than two decades, the seasoned campaigner finally realised a long-cherished dream – lifting the Ranji Trophy as captain of Jammu & Kashmir.

He will forever be remembered as the first skipper to guide J & K to a Ranji title. At 41, Dogra brought far more than runs to the table. His leadership, calm authority, and vast domestic experience offered direction and balance to a side scripting history. In tense phases, his presence steadied the dressing room; in defining moments, his bat did the talking.

Dogra ended the season as J & K's second-highest run-scorer, compiling 637 runs in 10 matches at an average of 42.46, with two centuries and four half-centuries. This season also marked a personal milestone – Dogra crossed the 10,000-run mark in the Ranji Trophy, becoming only the second batter after former India opener Wasim Jaffer to reach that landmark in the tournament's history.

**Qamran Iqbal:** *The Blaster's* appearance in the final was dramatic. Having featured in the earlier rounds, he was not part of the squad for the knockouts. But a last-minute injury to regular opener Shubham Khajuria forced the team management to fly him to Hubballi on the eve of the title clash – a sudden call that handed him a historic opportunity.

Qamran responded emphatically. In the second essay, he produced a monumental unbeaten 160 off 311 deliveries, after his side was reduced to 31 for two. It was an innings of endurance and authority, one that knocked out Karnataka.

Across the tournament, Qamran amassed 471 runs in six matches at an average of 58.87, including two centuries and two fifties. But it was that defining knock in the final – arriving as a last-minute replacement – that will permanently be written in J & K's cricketing folklore.

**Shubham Pundir:** *The Grinder* was another vital cog in the J & K wheel. Heading into Hubballi, his place in the XI was under scrutiny following modest returns in the quarterfinal and semifinal against Madhya Pradesh and Bengal.

Pundir answered – with runs. Walking in at No. 3, he crafted a resolute 121 in the first innings of the final, anchoring the batting effort and steering J & K to a mammoth total. It was an innings built on patience, discipline, and determination, laying a rock-solid foundation for what would become a title-winning performance. He was rightly adjudged Player of the Match for his defining century. In the 2025-26 Ranji season, Pundir accumulated 330 runs in four matches, including two hundreds, at an average of 47.14 – a grinder who delivered when it mattered most.

**Sahil Lotra:** *The Middle- and Lower-Order Punisher* was as decisive as the other headline-makers. Coming into the summit clash, he rose magnificently.

In the first innings, Sahil struck a vital 72, providing valuable momentum from the middle order and helping push the total to imposing heights. If that was important, what followed was extraordinary. In the second, he compiled a commanding unbeaten 101. Alongside Qamran, he stitched an unbroken 197-run partnership for the fifth wicket, a stand that flattened Karnataka's hopes and sealed the title.

**Abid Mushtaq:** *The All-Round Engine* ensured that J & K chugged along merrily to a historic Ranji Trophy triumph. An all-rounder in the truest sense, Mushtaq provided the balance every champion side requires – steady runs in the lower middle-order and timely breakthroughs with the ball.

This season, he amassed 445 runs in 10 matches at an average of 37.08, including a century and a half-century. With the ball, he was equally dependable, claiming 20 wickets at an average of 31.75 and maintaining a tidy economy rate of 3.20. His five-wicket haul during the campaign underlined his ability to influence games with more than just control. Mushtaq's consistent presence across disciplines ensured J & K were never one-dimensional. His all-round impact stitched the campaign together, playing a crucial part in transforming a dream into a landmark achievement.

**Ajay Sharma:** *The Monk, Mentor and Motivator* always remained a step ahead of the opponent(s). A stalwart, who scored over 10,000 First Class runs and picked up crucial wickets during his playing career, the head coach brought a treasure trove of experience to the team – yet chose to lead quietly from behind the scenes, observing, guiding, and fine-tuning every detail.

Known for his strict discipline, Ajay demanded focus and commitment from every player. Initially, the squad found his methods exacting, even daunting. But as trust grew, so did their performance. His combination of rigorous preparation, tactical acumen and belief in the players has been instrumental in shaping his team into a formidable force.

**Krishna Kumar:** *The Miracle Maker* was instrumental in shaping the bowling unit into the potent force it has become. Much of the transformation happened away from the spotlight – in long pre-season sessions that began as early as the All India Buchi Babu tournament in Chennai last August. It is no coincidence that bowlers like Nabi, Sunil, Yudhvir Singh and others have evolved into a lethal pack. Behind their sharp spells lies meticulous planning, clarity of roles, and relentless preparation, thanks to the former Rajasthan pacer's influence as the bowling coach.

In a chat with the *The Hindu* during the Ranji season, he underlined what sets the side apart. "Unity is the key. We're bonding very well. If someone makes a mistake, we don't criticise them, we encourage them. The dressing room environment is fantastic. Earlier, some small aspects were ignored, but now everything is professional. Even a small misfield is discussed in meetings. That has made everyone responsible. We're ticking most boxes, and that's making a huge difference." Those words now resonate louder than ever.

**Dishant Yagnik:** *The Visionary,* the side's fielding coach, boldly predicted during the Buchi Babu tournament that his side would lift the trophy.

But Yagnik's vision stretches beyond one crown. "Yes, and I'll stand by it. I truly believe that JKCA will be the first team in Indian domestic cricket to win all three formats in a single season – Ranji Trophy, Vijay Hazare, and Syed Mushtaq Ali. Call it a vision, a dream, or a claim – but it's rooted in what I've seen: the players' mindset, the administration's support, and the overall attitude. When a team wants to win that badly, victory is not too far away".

## THE GIST

- Jammu & Kashmir is fierce, relentless and unapologetically serious about its cricket
- Skipper Dogra represented Himachal Pradesh and Puducherry over a career spanning more than two decades. The seasoned campaigner finally realised a long-cherished dream — lifting the Ranji Trophy as captain of Jammu & Kashmir
- Yagnik's vision stretches beyond one crown. He truly believes J & K will be the first team in Indian domestic cricket to win all three formats in a single season

# Swachh Bharat: Who will empty the 44L toilet pits?

Under Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin), Karnataka has reported constructing over 44 lakh toilets in rural areas. Nearly 92% of these are single-leach pit structures which need human intervention

**Rishita Khanna**
BENGALURU

The 2011 Census recorded thousands of single-pit toilets and insanitary latrines- toilets where human excreta is not safely contained or treated, ultimately leading to human intervention.
PHOTO FOR REPRESENTATIONAL PURPOSE ONLY

"When the suction lorry finishes but the choke has still not eased, they ask us to get in. If the waste has hardened at the bottom, the hose cannot pump it out. That's when I climb down to loosen it so that it can be pumped out," said Maruthi B., a resident of Anepalya, who has been cleaning septic tanks and sewage treatment plants across Bengaluru for years.

Mr. Maruthi performs this work regularly. Officially, however, he is not a "manual scavenger".

The practice is banned, and the Karnataka government has repeatedly maintained that manual scavenging has been eliminated in the State.

**One pit each**

Yet, the structure of sanitation across Karnataka tells a different story. Under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin), Karnataka has reported constructing over 44 lakh toilets in rural areas. Nearly 92% of these are single-leach pit structures.

**Manual involvement**

"Such pits collect human waste in a single underground chamber and require periodic emptying once filled. They are not designed for easy mechanised suction, particularly when the contents solidify over time, making manual involvement common," Mr. Maruthi explained. The Centre had stated that existing single pits would gradually be converted into twin-pit systems, which allow one pit to rest while the other is in use and can often be emptied more safely after decomposition. The 2011 Census recorded thousands of single-pit toilets and insanitary latrines- toilets where human excreta is not safely contained or treated, ultimately leading to human intervention. However, there is no official data indicating how many single pits in Karnataka have been converted into twin pits, said K.B. Obalesha, State convenor of the Safai Karmachari Kavalu Samiti (SKKS). The dependence on manual cleaning extends beyond rural areas. As per government data, Karnataka has 274 urban local bodies outside Bengaluru, including 10 municipal corporations, 58 city municipal councils, 116 town municipal councils, and 90 town panchayats. Sanitation infrastructure varies widely across them. Of these 274 urban centres, only 50 have both piped sewage networks and sewage treatment plants (STPs). Around 100 have sewer networks but no STPs, while the remaining 124 rely primarily on-site sanitation systems such as septic tanks and pits, all of which require periodic emptying.

**The human cost of sanitation**

## Cost, speed and feasibility issues

**The Hindu Bureau**
BENGALURU

The officials of the Urban Development Department (UDD) explained that the construction of single-leach pit toilets links to a combination of cost, speed, and feasibility.

"Under the Swachh Bharat Mission, States were tasked with rapidly expanding toilet coverage in rural areas with tight timelines and limited budgets. The government had given a standard incentive of around ₹12,000 per household which led to the design choice. A basic single-leach pit toilet can be constructed within ₹10,000 to ₹15,000, making it the most affordable and quickest to meet coverage targets. The single pits also require minimal technical expertise and are water efficient. For households with limited land and irregular water supply, they offer an immediate, affordable solution compared to sewer connections," the officials said.

They said that in many villages, underground sewerage networks were financially and logistically unviable, making on-site containment the only practical option. They claimed that single pits could be upgraded into twin-pit systems once filled.

**Manual entry persists**

Even in Bengaluru, which operates under a separate sewerage network and treatment system, workers said manual entry persists.

The Karnataka State Pollution Control Board has mandated STPs for apartments with more than 20 units, and thousands of apartment complexes have installed in-house STPs or septic systems. The workers said that when suction and jetting equipment fail to clear blockages in these systems, they are called in .

Despite the scale of sanitation infrastructure requiring regular maintenance, the State has officially recognised only 7,483 manual scavengers through surveys conducted before 2018, during a 2018-19 pilot by the National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC), and following High Court directions in 2020.

Of these, 2,927 received ID cards from NSKFDC and 4,556 from the Karnataka Safai Karmachari Commission.

To identify the manual scavengers and eradicate this practice, the State government, in 2019, directed the constitution of Emergency Response Units (ERUs) aimed at addressing mechanisation gaps, identifying and verifying manual scavengers, and responding to hazardous cleaning incidents. However, these units have not been constituted.

*(In this series, we trace the unseen lives of Karnataka's sanitation workers, capturing the human cost, systemic failures, and hidden labour that keeps the sanitation network functioning.)*

## East corporation to develop 50 km of pedestrian pathways

**The Hindu Bureau**
BENGALURU

The East City Corporation on Sunday announced plans to develop 50 km of pedestrian pathways in the Mahadevapura zone within the next two months, following instructions from Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) Chief Commissioner M. Maheshwar Rao.

Mr. Rao, speaking after flagging off a 10-km pedestrian walk from Phoenix Mall to Hope Farm in Whitefield, said footpath development along metro corridors would benefit citizens.

Mr. Rao directed officials to remove obstacles, work on road-widening issues, clear encroachments, and ensure pedestrian safety and assured that necessary funds would be provided.

The GBA Chief Commissioner encouraged partnerships with corporate organisations to expedite work.

The North City Corporation on Sunday launched a week-long "Mega Cleanliness Drive for a Beautiful City" across all seven divisions. The initiative saw 1,823 participants, including members of Residents' Welfare Associations (RWAs), taking part in 42 'plogging' drives, leading to the clearance of more than 35.60 tonne of waste.

## Newly-wed die in accident

**The Hindu Bureau**
BELAGAVI

A newly-wed couple died in a road accident in Kadahalli of Haveri district on Sunday. Thirtyfour-year-old Kartik Hugar and his 30-year-old wife Aishwarya Hugar died when their car hit a stationary vehicle on National Highway 48. They were married two weeks ago.

A case has been registered.

Among the prominent trains operating partly on this corridor is the Yeshwantpur-Kacheguda Vande Bharat Express, which is likely to gain from the improved track standards. ALLEN EGENUSE J.

## Speed limit on Yelahanka and Dharmavaram rail corridor to be upgraded

**The Hindu Bureau**
BENGALURU

South Western Railway (SWR) has initiated steps to upgrade the 161-km Yelahanka-Dharmavaram rail corridor to support a maximum speed of 130 kmph, up from the present limit of 110 kmph.

The move is part of the Railways' phased programme to enhance speeds on key routes and is expected to benefit more than 40 passenger and freight trains operating along the stretch, according to officials.

The officials said that the Yelahanka-Dharmavaram section would soon become the second route in the Bengaluru Division to be upgraded to 130 kmph, after the Bengaluru-Jolarpettai section.

"The enhancement is expected to reduce travel time and improve punctuality for services connecting Bengaluru with several States, including north Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal," an official said.

Among the prominent trains operating partly on this corridor is the Yeshwantpur-Kacheguda Vande Bharat Express, which is likely to gain from the improved track standards.

**Doubling project**

Meanwhile, SWR has commissioned the 30.04-km doubling section between Makajipalli and Dharmavaram as part of the Penukonda-Dharmavaram Doubling Project.

The work was cleared following a statutory inspection by the Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS).

The project involved substantial infrastructure additions, including 66 minor bridges, 15 Road Under Bridges, one Foot Over Bridge, and the development of a station yard with five lines.

A SWR official said the works required close coordination with South Central Railway, especially at Dharmavaram station, and with the CRS of both zones. A speed trial was conducted at 121 kmph, during which the Oscillation Monitoring System recorded no abnormal peaks. Based on the inspection and trial results, the CRS has authorised operations on the doubled section at a maximum speed of 110 kmph.

**SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY**
**CONSTRUCTION ORGANISATION**
Construction Organisation, South Western Railway invites applications for engagement of Sector Expert from the Indian Railway Service of Engineers (IRSE) Officers who have **Retired from SAG or Higher Grade** for the purpose of Peer Review of DPRs for a period of 03 ( Three) Years.
The Total Number of Requirements is for 03 Posts.
The last date for receipt of applications through e-mail in dycecnwbnc@gmail.com up to **24:00 hrs. of 25-03-2026** in a single and legible PDF file.
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**SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY**
**EXPRESSION OF INTEREST**
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# Why key to coconut cultivation today is sustainability, not productivity

The 'Coconut Promotion Scheme' must not be limited to distributing high-yield seedlings but must prioritise the development and mass multiplication of climate-resilient varieties for farms along the east coast and in peninsular regions, and wilt-tolerant varieties for coconut-growing regions along the west coast

R. Ranjit Kumar

The 2026-27 Union Budget announced a 'Coconut Promotion Scheme' with the primary aim of improving productivity by rejuvenating old, non-productive gardens with high yielding coconut varieties and establishing new plantations along the coast. The farming community has welcomed the announcement.

The Coconut Development Board (CDB) is already implementing a similar scheme, which has helped rejuvenate old gardens and expanded cultivation into non-traditional areas, including in parts of Gujarat, Assam, and other non-peninsular regions – sufficient to partially offset the widespread destruction of coconut palms in Kerala and Tamil Nadu by disease.

## Heat and disease

India is the world's largest producer and consumer of coconuts. The domestic prices of coconut and tender coconut remain far higher than prevailing international prices even though the productivity per palm in India is already higher than in Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and Indonesia. In places like Anaimalai in Tamil Nadu, Dwarf x Tall hybrid palms regularly produce 250 to 300 tender coconuts per tree.

Today, climate change and disease are greater concerns than productivity. Research by the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI) has projected that temperatures in regions with plantations may rise by 1.6-2.1°C by 2050 and up to 3.2 °C by 2070. Higher temperature without a significant change in the rainfall levels will increase the vapour pressure deficit and intensify drought stress.

Studies have also found that large parts of interior peninsular India, including parts of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, along with the south interior region of Tamil Nadu and the east coasts could become less suitable for coconut cultivation in the coming decades as a result.

## Expanded scope

The CPCRI has found that coconut can still be cultivated along the Western Ghats belt in Kerala, coastal Karnataka, and western Tamil Nadu even during the high temperature regimes. However, these regions are beset by root wilt disease; in Alappuzha and Pollachi districts, the coconut landscape has been completely devastated.

Therefore, the new 'Coconut Promotion Scheme' must not be limited to distributing high-yield seedlings but must prioritise the development and mass multiplication of climate-resilient varieties for farms along the east coast and in peninsular regions, and wilt-tolerant varieties for the traditional coconut-growing regions along the west coast.

Large tracts of land vested with the State horticulture departments and universities can be used to establish mother palm gardens. Similarly, the State should consider strengthening research in institutions like the CPCRI and the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, so that they can identify and breed heat-tolerant, drought-resilient, and disease-resistant genotypes.

Farmer producer organisations (FPOs), cooperatives, and credible private nurseries should also be enabled to mass-produce these resilient seedlings.

The aspect of the scheme to enhance productivity entails distributing free or subsidised inputs. Many such schemes often distribute biological inputs, microbial formulations, micro-nutrients, etc. But in practice, they are often substandard or poorly stored, reducing the microbial viability.

Instead, the State should consider direct benefit transfers, since farmers must be trusted to decide whether they need irrigation systems, soil amendments, labour for rejuvenation or other improvements.

## Failed take-off

The third area that merits a serious rethink is adding value. In many coconut-growing regions today, production barely meets strong domestic demand for culinary purposes. The domestic price of coconut has increased three-fold since 2024. Encouraging FPOs to invest in processing units during lean supply periods without also assuring them of marketing channels will only expose them to financial risk. The equipment already supplied under such schemes often lies idle.

The 'Cluster Development Programme' implemented by the National Horticulture Board (NHB) has an outlay of about ₹150 crore for three verticals: production, value addition, and marketing. However, the programme didn't take off because its high investment barriers prevented FPOs and cooperatives from being meaningful participants as implementing agencies. Even after repeated stakeholder consultations and deadline extensions, private firms were not interested in being the implementing agencies.

**Studies show that parts of interior peninsular India, including Karnataka and A.P., along with southern T.N. and the east coast could be less suitable for coconut cultivation due to climate change and diseases**

The CDB is already implementing schemes that provide a 25% capital subsidy to the industry involved in coconut value addition, so there is no reason for them to subscribe to the same variant of the scheme implemented by the NHB, that too with numerous compliance requirements, including inspection and auditing regulations. The subsidy percentage also varies across the verticals, confusing farmers and investors alike.

The banana cluster in southern Tamil Nadu is another example of an enterprise that remains largely on paper.

## Smaller but better

The government must evaluate these experiences in good faith, including by adopting fool-proof metrics to measure the success of schemes rather than resorting to official reports and stage-managed interactions with farmers.

Large, centrally designed clusters may not be the answer. Instead, smaller pilot models anchored in a genuine cooperative spirit with hand-holding – for example, marketing partnerships with experienced FMCG players like Amul or ITC – could be tested in locations such as Tiptur (which grows ball copra), Anaimalai (tender coconuts), and Pollachi (coconut oil). Smaller but better designed projects can yield more useful lessons as well.

Dovetailing the 'Coconut Promotion Scheme' with the 'Cluster Development Programme' could also eventually help fund the multiplication of better coconut saplings.

## Real crises

Farmers rarely have the institutional voice that large industries possess. Policies are often drafted based on official briefings rather than ground realities. A simple visit to affected areas like Alappuzha and Pollachi will reveal that root wilt disease is destroying livelihoods and that climate stress is no longer theoretical.

The 'Coconut Promotion Scheme' is an opportunity to study and develop climate-resilient and disease-resistant coconut varieties, and to acknowledge that enhancing productivity alone won't secure the future. Climate resilience, wilt resistance, direct trust in farmers, and honest evaluation of past failures must guide implementation.

If these principles are adopted in full spirit, the scheme can protect India's leadership in coconut cultivation for decades. If not, however, it will be yet another well-intentioned allocation that doesn't address the real crises facing coconut cultivators.

*(R. Ranjit Kumar is managing director, Pollachi Nutmeg Farmer Producer Company, and ICAR-IARI Innovative Farmer Awardee. ranjitkct@gmail.com)*

A coconut farm at Poosaripatti near Pollachi in Coimbatore district. PERIASAMY M.

## THE GIST

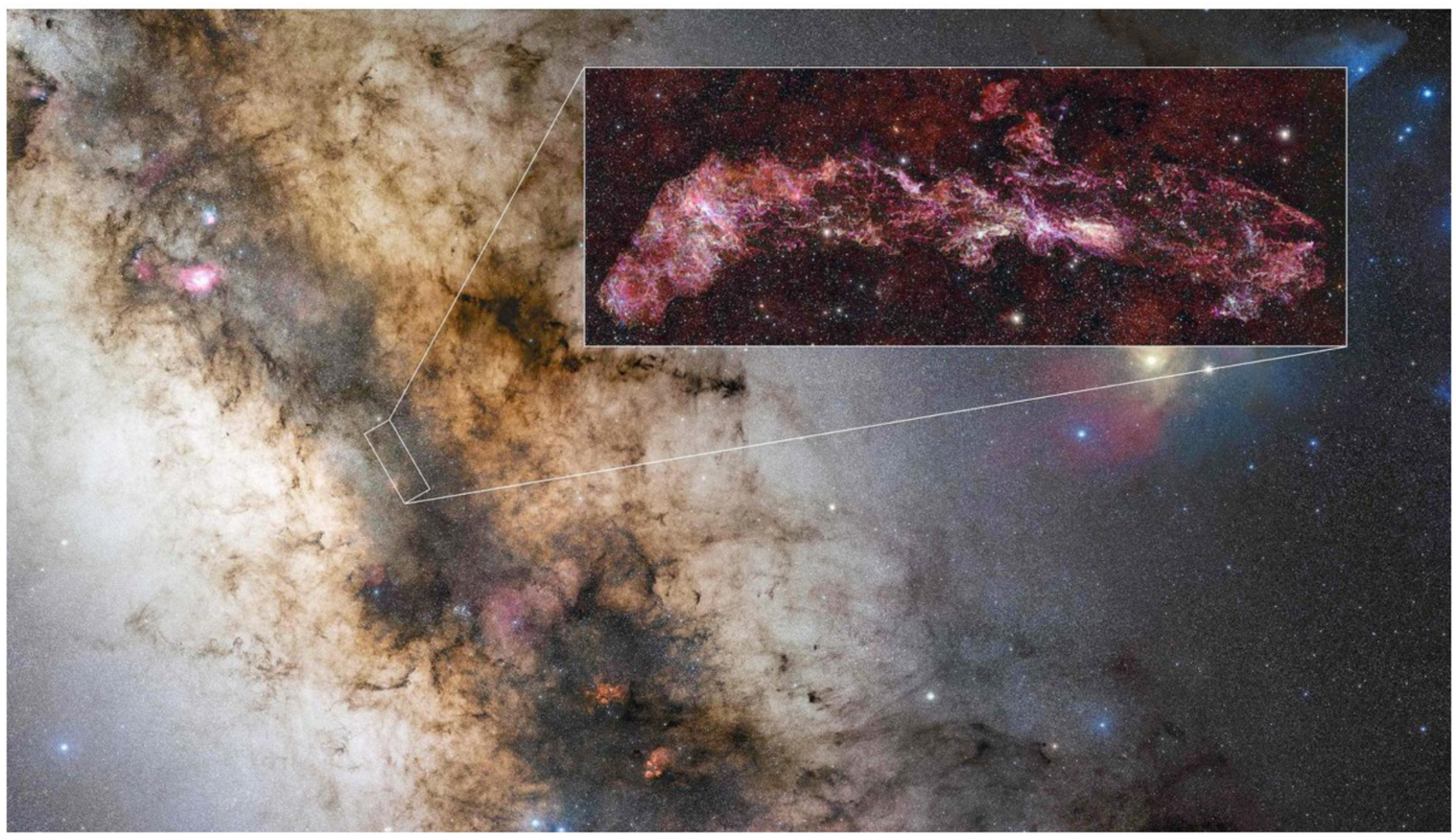
India is the world's largest producer and consumer of coconuts. However, the domestic prices of coconut and tender coconut remain far higher than prevailing international prices

The 2026-27 Union Budget announced a 'Coconut Promotion Scheme' with the primary aim of improving productivity by rejuvenating old, non-productive gardens with high yielding coconut varieties and establishing new plantations along the coast

Today, climate change and disease are greater concerns than productivity for coconut cultivation in the country

Climate resilience, wilt resistance, direct trust in farmers, and honest evaluation of past failures must guide implementation of the scheme

## BIG SHOT



The Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA) has mapped the Central Molecular Zone, a region at the core of our galaxy rich in dense and intricate gas clouds; this image was released on February 26. Scientists have been able to observe this region of the Milky Way in detail for the first time, where star formation could provide keys to understanding the origins of the universe. AFP

## WHAT IS IT?

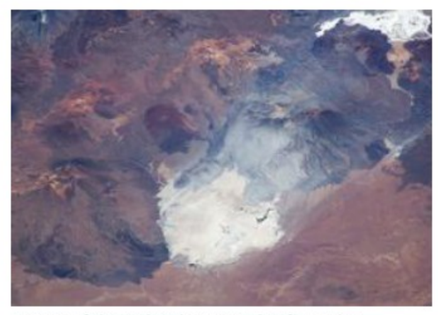
# Salar de Pajonales: Mars analogue

One of the best places to practice hunting for life on Mars could be in the Atacama Desert in Chile. Scientists recently studied the Salar de Pajonales, an incredibly dry and freezing salt flat located 3.5 km above sea level. Together with the fact that it is blasted by ultraviolet radiation, the Salar is a near-perfect analogue of the conditions on Mars.

The scientists focused on rocks made of gypsum, a mineral ($CaSO_4.2H_2O$) found on both earth and Mars. Specifically, they looked at layered rock structures built by microbes over long spans of time called stromatolites. They found that this mineral has acted like a protective shelter for life in the Salar in two ways.

First, they found living microbes hiding just millimetres beneath the rock's surface. Because gypsum is translucent, it allows enough sunlight in for the microbes to subsist on but blocks harmful radiation and traps small amounts of moisture. The resulting conditions allow life to survive in an otherwise hostile environment. Second, deeper inside the stromatolites, the team found fossils and chemical fingerprints of ancient life, meaning after the microbes died, the gypsum sealed their remains and preserved them.

The study is important because scientists know Mars has large deposits of gypsum, and orbiters and satellites could look there in future. If gypsum can protect microbes and preserve fossils in the earth's most extreme desert, it is reasonable to think it could be holding secrets of ancient Martian life as well.



A view of the Salar de Pajonales from the International Space Station's Expedition 6. NASA

**For feedback and suggestions** for 'Science', please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Science'

# GBA, BDA to draft separate Revised Master Plans

The new draft is only expected in 2027, which will be 12 years after the last Revised Master Plan was due; the master plan in force was drafted in 2005

**K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj**
BENGALURU

The Greater Bengaluru Authority building. FILE PHOTO

Efforts to draw up a Revised Master Plan (RMP) - 2041 by the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) have been hit with the Greater Bengaluru Governance Act, 2024, which makes Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) the Local Planning Authority (LPA) for the GBA area of 712 sq. km.

The new draft is only expected in 2027, which will be 12 years after the last RMP was due. The master plan in force was drafted in 2005.

Earlier, the BDA was the LPA for the entire Bengaluru Metropolitan Area (BMA) of 1,294 sq. km, including the GBA area. Now, the GBA is the LPA for its area and the BDA is the LPA for the peripheral areas of BMA spread over 582 sq. km.

The GBA has called for tenders to rope in a consultant for drafting the RMP-2041 and bidding closes on March 6. Once a consultant is selected, they will get 11 months time to draft a new RMP after which it will be submitted to the government and be opened for the public, said Sunil Kumar P., Chief Town Planner, GBA.

The BDA had called similar tenders twice in 2025 when it was preparing the RMP for the entire BMA. Scrapping them, the BDA is all set to call tenders for hiring a consultant to prepare an RMP for the reduced area this week, said M.C. Shashikumar, Member (Planning), BDA.

The BDA had roped in Karnataka State Remote Sensing Applications Centre (KSRSAC) to prepare a base map for the the BMA in 2025. While a base map for the GBA area is ready and will be shared with the GBA, to form a starting point for GBA's RMP-2041, a new base map will have to be created for the new BDA area.

The KSRSAC will likely be tasked with creating this base map as well, sources said.

**Coordination**

With two RMPs for the BMA, there are concerns over coordination, especially as the city has already grown beyond the GBA limits into BDA areas. "We need to draft the two plans in complete synergy so that the transition from one plan to another should be seamless on the ground," Mr. Sunil said.

Sources in the government said that either a coordination committee with town planners from the GBA and the BDA would be formed to this end, or committees to oversee the RMP process in both bodies would have members from the other body.

**First RMP**

Town planners and civic activists have welcomed GBA being made LPA, mainly for two reasons; planning was under the local government, in line with the 74th amendment of the Constitution of India, and for the first time, all parastatals of the city would be involved in planning.

Earlier, master plans have been criticised for neither involving parastatals like Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd. (BMRCL), Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) and Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) etc, nor was it binding on them. This meant the RMPs' became a mere land use plan, rather than a holistic plan for the city's growth.

**Draft withdrawn**

In fact, an earlier draft of RMP-2031 was withdrawn by the BDA, as the Comprehensive Mobility Plan of the BMRCL opted for Transit Oriented Development, densifying areas along metro corridors providing higher Floor Area Ratio, which was not part of the draft RMP-2031.

However, with no civic polls still, the RMP-2041 will again likely be driven by bureaucrats rather than elected representatives.

If the five corporations get elected councils later this year, it needs to be seen how councillors and the five corporations will be involved in drafting the RMP.

# Retired motor vehicle inspector booked for issuing 10,000 FCs without inspection

**Imran Gowhar**
BENGALURU

The HSR Layout Police on Saturday registered an FIR against a retired Senior Motor Vehicle Inspector for allegedly issuing over 10,000 fitness certificates without conducting mandatory physical inspections, causing substantial loss to the Transport Department.

According to the complaint, by the Regional Transport Officer (RTO) of Peenya Layout in Bengaluru, Nisar Ahmed, who served as a Senior Motor Vehicle Inspector in the office for nearly eight years, retired on January 31, 2026.

During his tenure from August 1, 2025, to January 31, 2026, he allegedly issued Form 38(A) fitness certificates for approximately 10,210 out-of-State vehicles without physically inspecting them, as mandated by the Motor Vehicles Act.

**The irregularities came to light following a complaint submitted by advocate N. Nataraj Sharma**

The irregularities came to light following a complaint submitted by advocate N. Nataraj Sharma, Federation of Karnataka State Private Transport Association president, to the Transport Commissioner. Acting on the complaint, the Commissioner directed the Joint Transport Commissioner to conduct an inquiry and submit a report.

**Detailed verification**

On February 19, 2026, officials conducted a detailed verification and retrieved data relating to 10,210 vehicles from the department's system. The inquiry reportedly found that Form 38(2) certificates had been issued to these vehicles in violation of prescribed procedures.

Additionally, it was found that certificates had also been issued to 41 vehicles registered in Gujarat. Based on preliminary findings and email communication from the authorities concerned, Nisar Ahmed was placed under suspension on January 20, 2026.

The Joint Transport Commissioner submitted a report to the Transport Commissioner on Friday, recommending criminal action. Subsequently, the Commissioner directed that a criminal case be registered.

The Joint Commissioner then instructed the Regional Transport Officer to file a formal complaint against the accused.

The complaint alleges that by issuing fitness certificates without physical verification and in alleged collusion with vehicle owners, the retired inspector committed offences amounting to criminal breach of trust and cheating, causing wrongful loss to the Transport Department.

A case has been registered and further investigation is underway.

**Timings**
**BENGALURU**

| | |
|---|---|
| **MONDAY, MAR. 02** | |
| RISE 06:35 | SET 18:28 |
| RISE 17:36 | SET 05:38 |
| **TUESDAY, MAR. 03** | |
| RISE 06:34 | SET 18:29 |
| RISE 18:28 | SET 06:19 |
| **WEDNESDAY, MAR. 04** | |
| RISE 06:34 | SET 18:29 |
| RISE 19:19 | SET 06:58 |

| Bengaluru Weather | max | min |
|---|---|---|
| Tumakuru | 30 | 20 |
| Mysuru | 33 | 21 |
| Bengaluru | 32 | 20 |

**Bengaluru Today**
**32°C** The weather will be dry. Day will be little warm. Night will be pleasant.

**Bengaluru Tomorrow**
**32°C** Morning will be slight cool with mist and haze. Day will be little warm. Night also will be slight cool.

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# Three more held for abetment in student gang-rape case

**The Hindu Bureau**
BENGALURU

Continuing their investigation into the alleged gang rape of a college student, the Amruthahalli police have arrested three more persons for abetting the crime.

During the investigation, the police examined six witnesses and recorded their statements. On the basis of the complainant's statement and supporting evidence, two main accused were arrested earlier.

The accused have been identified as Diksan Santhra, 21, a resident of West Bengal, and Nikhil, 34, a second-hand car dealer and resident of Sakleshpur in Hassan district.

They were produced before the jurisdictional court and remanded in police custody for further interrogation.

The police have now detained three others for allegedly assisting the accused in committing the offence. They have been identified as Shravan, 21, from Shivamogga; Aniruddh, 33, from Davangere district; and Mohith Jain, 23, a native of Gujarat.

**Custody**

According to the police, the trio is suspected of facilitating the crime and providing support to the prime accused before and after the incident. They have been taken into custody and are being questioned.

Further investigation was in progress.

# Student killed in elephant attack in Kodagu

**The Hindu Bureau**
MYSURU

A PU student was killed in a wild elephant attack at Bettathuru village in Madikeri taluk of Kodagu district on Saturday evening.

The deceased, identified as Pooja, 17, daughter of Girish and a student of St. Michael's College in Madikeri, was attacked by the elephant after she reached her village by bus on Saturday evening.

The attack occured while she was walking towards her house. A severely injured Pooja was rushed to the hospital, but she died en route, according to sources.

Bettathuru village is on the fringes of the forest and Pooja's house was barely 100 m from the forest area.

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# Text&Context

THE HINDU

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

### Percentage increase in Gross GST collection in February

**8.1** in per cent. Gross GST collection increased by 8.1% to over ₹1.83 lakh crore in February, led by higher growth in revenues from imports and domestic sales. Gross domestic revenue rose 5.3% to about ₹1.36 lakh crore, while gross import revenue climbed 17.2% to ₹47,837 crore. PTI

### International flights to West Asia cancelled by Pak. after Iran attack

**184** At least 184 international flights of different airlines from Pakistan to West Asia have been cancelled since Saturday. International flights in West Asia have all been badly disrupted or suspended after the closure of the Dubai and Abu Dhabi airports. PTI

### Worth of projects inaugurated in Madurai by PM

**4,400** in ₹ crore. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday also laid foundation stone for four-laning of Marakkanam-Puducherry section and Paramakudi-Ramanathapuram section of key NH routes. PTI

### Number of calls received by NORKA helpdesk

**381** A 24-hour helpdesk set up by NORKA Roots, following the Israel-Iran conflict, has received 381 calls till 11:30 a.m. on Sunday, officials said. It was established as per the direction of Chief Minister's Office to assist Non-Resident Keralites and their family members. PTI

### Persons killed in a blast at explosives factory in Nagpur

**18** At least 18 persons were killed and 20 others injured in a blast that tore through an explosives manufacturing factory in Maharashtra's Nagpur district on Sunday, police said. The blast took place at the SBL Energy Limited factory, a senior police official said. PTI

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# Missile interceptors in U.S.-Iran war

How is this conflict different from the 12-day war? What is missile defence and how does it work? How effective are Iron Dome and Patriot systems? Can saturation attacks exhaust interceptors? What systems are Iran deploying?

EXPLAINER

Vasudevan Mukunth

The outbreak of fresh hostilities between the U.S.-led coalition, including Israel and the United Arab Emirates, and Iran seems to have triggered a newly integrated regional air defence network different from the one these actors deployed during their brief yet intense conflict in June last year.

The 12-day war in 2025 was until then the most significant test of the Integrated Air and Missile Defence, with the alliance faced with having to blunt retaliation by Iran that included more than 500 ballistic missiles and over twice as many 'suicide drones'. This time, with the theatre of conflict including the Persian Gulf, the UAE has brought to bear its South Korean defence system together with the debut of U.S. systems that were only prototypes last year.

While many of these systems showcase new abilities, they also highlight the U.S.' and Israel's need to 'ration' them to keep costs down and ensure they're still available should the conflict drag on.

An interceptor flies in the sky as missiles from Iran are fired to Israel, as seen from Tel Aviv. FILE PHOTO

**What is missile defence?**

Missile defence refers to a military system that finds and destroys incoming missiles before they hit their targets. These systems use sensors – including satellites in earth orbit and radar stations on the ground – to watch the sky and, when they spot an enemy missile, track its speed and direction.

Then, military command centres use powerful computers and military personnel to receive the data from the sensors and based on that calculate which targets the missile endangers and which response is most suitable. One important kind of response is the interceptor – which is a missile that flies towards the incoming threat with the purpose of destroying it.

In addition to saving lives and property, missile defence can discourage enemies from starting conflicts that could require missiles, since the interceptors could render them ineffective, as well as give leaders more time to deliberate.

**How an interceptor works**

Let's use the example of the U.S. Patriot system, which consists of several components connected by cables or wireless data links.

Its radar unit remains stationary on the ground rather than spinning, like the radar you see in airports. It steers thousands of radio beams across the sky to scan for objects. When these beams hit an aircraft or incoming missile, they bounce back to the radar and a computer analyses the returning signals to estimate the object's speed, location, altitude, and direction.

If the object is deemed to be a threat, a connected computer can concentrate the radar's energy at that point in the sky. Such focused tracking is called a lock, and in this condition the radar will update the target's position continuously.

Meanwhile, the computers at the Engagement Control Station (ECS), a mobile command centre operated by soldiers, calculate the trajectory of the object and determine when to fire a counter-measure. When the system commands a launch, a signal goes to a launcher truck, which ignites the rocket motor of an interceptor. As the interceptor lifts off, the ground radar will continue to track both the target and the missile simultaneously. The ECS will compare the positions of both objects and send commands to the interceptor to guide it through the air.

In the final seconds of flight, the interceptor will use its onboard seeker – a component that acts like its driver – to find the target. Since interceptors often move at multiple times the speed of sound, seekers have to be very precise. The interception itself can happen in one of two ways. Older missiles use a proximity fuse that senses when the target is nearby and blows up a powerful warhead, destroying the object with shrapnel. Newer interceptors are hit-to-kill: the missile steers itself directly into the body of the target, using the kinetic energy of the collision to shatter it.

The radar observes the impact to confirm the target has been destroyed before resetting to engage the next threat.

**How effective are interceptors?**

The efficacy of an interceptor varies depending on the target.

The short-range rockets that Israel uses as part of its 'Iron Dome' system is effective against simple, slow-moving rockets, with the country reporting 80-97% success rates in recent conflicts.

The U.S. Patriot system on the other hand deals with targets moving much faster and is less successful in absolute terms. For example, in May 2023, about a year after Russia's invasion of Ukraine had begun, Patriot had 100% success against six Russian Kinzhal hypersonic missiles on one night over Kyiv and more than 60% against the Iskander-M ballistic missiles.

After that, Russia modified Iskander-M to release decoys and make sharp turns through the air just before it strikes. Russia has also been launching larger groups of missiles and drones at once. So even if a Patriot battery has a high success rate, it only carries a limited number of interceptors. Altogether, its rate has reportedly dropped to around 10% since.

According to the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, "The only programme designed to protect the entire United States homeland from a long-range missile attack is the GMD [Ground-based Midcourse Defence] programme. GMD has a failing test record: a success rate of just 55% in highly scripted tests, including three misses in the last six tries."

**What makes Cheongung II different?**

In the ongoing conflict, the UAE has activated a missile defence involving the South Korean Cheongung II missiles while the alliance has been using the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) and the Patriot batteries supplied by the U.S. The UAE acquired Cheongung from South Korea to intercept low-flying Iranian cruise missiles and tactical ballistic missiles over the Gulf.

These missiles use a hit-to-kill technology similar to the U.S. Patriot system but are also optimised for threats in the Persian Gulf.

A missile launched from coastal Iran can reach the UAE within minutes. Older versions of Patriot used radars that scanned for objects in a 120° cone. If a threat came from outside this cone, the battery had to physically rotate, losing precious seconds. Cheongung II however uses a 'Vertical Launch System' fit with a rotating multi-function radar that can fire in 360° without moving the launcher.

Missiles called "skimmers" can fly just above the surface of the Gulf's waters to stay under the radar's view, so the Cheongung II missile is also equipped with a radar in its nose, which it turns on in the final seconds of flight to not have to depend on the ground radar as it approaches impact.

**How does cost shape interceptor use?**

While the U.S. relied heavily on its expensive Patriot defence system during the June 2025 conflict, it has deployed its new Indirect Fire Protection Capability to protect bases in the UAE and Kuwait. This system uses AIM-9X Sidewinder missiles as interceptors and helps with rationing Patriot.

Patriot's cost is relevant because Iran's strategy, called a saturation attack, has been to fire a flurry of cheap missiles to exhaust the alliance's interceptors. The system's PAC-3 Missile Segment Enhancement (MSE) interceptors however cost around $4 million per shot.

The U.S. Navy has deployed SM-6 missiles in their 'dual' configuration, in which they can intercept ballistic missiles in their terminal phase as well as Iranian fast-attack craft.

Finally, after Israel introduced it during the 12-day war, the country's 'Iron Beam' high-energy laser has become the primary defence against drone swarms. As with the U.S. and Patriot, Iron Beam is reportedly allowing Israel to ration its Arrow 3 and Stunner.

**What changed after the 12-day war?**

During the 12-day war, the first line of defence comprised the Israeli Arrow 3 system and U.S. Navy destroyers with SM-3 missiles. Arrow 3 engaged medium-range ballistic missiles in space, before they reentered the atmosphere, although the intensity of the barrage rapidly depleted Israeli stockpiles by the second week of the conflict. Likewise U.S. destroyers in the Red and the Mediterranean Seas recorded the heaviest use of the SM-3 missiles in combat until then.

The endo-atmospheric defence system used U.S. THAAD batteries and Israel's legacy Arrow 2 system. Then came Israel's David Sling with its Stunner interceptors, with Patriot forming the last line.

Against the 'suicide drones', the alliance used the 'Iron Dome' and its Tamir interceptors and 'Iron Beam', with help from air to air missiles fired by the U.S. Air Force and Navy, the Royal Air Force, and France's Rafales.

As of January this year, an important focus area for the U.S. and its allies was to replenish the expended munitions. The U.S. Department of Defence has already quadrupled production orders for THAAD and PAC-3 MSE interceptors and has accelerated the deployment of directed-energy systems to naval vessels.

This said, "Production of all munitions – interceptors for THAAD, Patriot, Arrow, David's Sling, and Iron Dome…– is far slower than current combat use or anticipated future high-intensity war requirements," Charles Corcoran and Ari Cicurel wrote in *RealClearDefence* in January 2026. Maj. Gen. Corcoran is a former chief of staff of the U.S. Air Forces Central Command and Cicurel is the associate director of foreign policy at the Jewish Institute for National Security of America.

They added that "Replenishing THAAD shortages … will take at least 1.5 years at current production capacity" and that U.S. manufacturing has "not scaled for high-tempo operations in decades".

**How strong is Iran's air and missile defence network?**

Iran's most advanced interceptor is an upgraded version of the Bavar-373 system using the Sayyad-4B missile, reportedly designed to intercept targets at ranges exceeding 300 km. Iran also recently unveiled its Arman Ballistic Missile Defence system, which it has said is optimised to intercept short- to medium-range ballistic missiles with 360° radar coverage.

To counter cruise missiles as well as F-35 and F-15 fighter jets, the military is using the Sevom-e-Khordad missile system. It's highly mobile, which means it can fire from one place and quickly relocate to another, making it harder for U.S. forces to destroy its radars. Iran is reportedly using Sayyad-3 missiles with this system to protect its Natanz and Isfahan nuclear facilities.

With reports of strikes in Tehran, Iran is also using the Russia-made Tor-M1 short-range missiles to intercept precision-guided bombs and the Majid and Azarakhsh systems to counter low-flying drones and cruise missiles.

This said, reports of explosions in Tehran and Isfahan indicate the U.S. and Israeli barrage could be overwhelming Iran's interceptors with sheer volume. This is possible because once a battery fires one batch of around six missiles, it needs to reload, leaving the site defenceless until then. The Bavar-373 system's purported ability to detect stealth aircraft has also been in question since the alliance has struck targets in Tehran.

## THE GIST

- The outbreak of fresh hostilities has triggered a newly integrated regional air defence network, with the UAE activating Cheongung II and the U.S. deploying prototype systems alongside Patriot and THAAD.
- Interceptors such as PAC-3 MSE, SM-6 and AIM-9X are being rationed amid saturation attacks, as production remains far slower than current combat use.
- Iran is using Bavar-373, Arman BMD, Sevom-e-Khordad and Tor-M1 systems, but sheer volume and reload gaps may be overwhelming its interceptors.

# State seeks Centre's intervention in evacuation

The Karnataka govt. is sharing details of persons from the State who are stranded in the West Asian countries, following the attack by U.S. and Israel on Iran, with the MEA for further action

WEST ASIA CONFLICT

**The Hindu Bureau**
BENGALURU/ SHIVAMOGGA/ MANGALURU

As hundreds of Kannadigas are among thousands of Indians reported to be stranded in cities across West Asian countries owing to the closure of airspace, the State government has urged the Centre to intervene to ensure flexible rescheduling, arrangement of adequate flights and complimentary boarding and lodging facilities, among others

The Karnataka government is sharing details of persons from the State who are stranded in the West Asian countries with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) for further action, following the attack by the U.S. and Israel on Iran. While the State government is disseminating information, the decision on evacuation is left to the Centre, officials said.

Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh has written to External Affairs Secretary Vikram Misri to establish a dedicated coordination mechanism with the State government to facilitate information sharing and effective response. Urging him to consider priority evacuation or special repatriation measures, she has urged him to provide the necessary assistance to ensure the safety and well-being of Kannadigas. The Chief Secretary has also written to Civil Aviation Secretary Samir Kumar Sinha to intervene with airlines.

As airports have been shut, causing anxiety among the family members of those who have been stranded, information from across the State is trickling in about their travails.

### What has Karnataka done

- State Emergency Operations Centre and all District Emergency Operations Centres made fully activated and functioning 24/7
- The SEOC and DEOCs are updating Ministry of External Affairs advisories regularly
- Provided helpline numbers of Indian Embassies in West Asia
- Karnataka Resident Commissioner in Delhi asked to coordinate with Rapid Response Cell of the Ministry of External Affairs

**State Emergency Operations numbers**
080 22340676
080 22253707 (Short code 1070)

**Legislators stuck**

Among the legislators stuck in Dubai are MLAs A.C. Srinivas and Nara Bharath Reddy, and MLC S.L. Bhojegowda besides Pushpa Amarnath, vice-chairperson of Guarantee Authority.

About 150 people, most of them who have gone to Iran for religious studies or for medical education, from Alipur in Chickballapur, are also stranded in different parts of Iran. Incidentally, the Iranian Leader had visited Alipur in 1981 and inaugurated a hospital before he took over as the Supreme Leader.

According to former Minister B. Nagendra, 52 persons, including 25 women, who were on tour to Dubai, have been stranded in Dubai after they were denied entry to the airport. He told Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday that 32 of them were from Ballari and 20 persons were from Siruguppa, and most of them were farmers.

Siddaramaiah

Five persons, all natives of Arsikere, who were in Dubai for an award ceremony, have also been stuck. A group of five Hakki Pikki tribals from Angadihalli in Belur taluk of Hassan, who were in Bahrain to sell plant extracts and oil, are also struck. In a video message sent by Jamuna, a member of the group, she said that there was an air strike close to where they were staying, and a person hailing from Mangaluru had helped them move to a safe place temporarily.

Meanwhile, Munish Moudgil, Principal Secretary, Revenue Department (Disaster Management, Bhoomi and UPOR), said that the list of callers had been constantly going up, and that the State Government was sharing the list with the Ministry of External Affairs. "Since the internet and mobile services are operational, information is being provided about advisories and phone numbers. Only when the air traffic is allowed then these people can be evacuated," he added.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah told presspersons at Shivamogga that the State government is in touch with the Centre to bring back Kannadigas stuck in West Asia safely back home. "At present, flight operations have been stopped due to conflict. I have told the officials to ensure all of them return home safely soon after flight operations are resumed. We are in constant touch with the Ministry of External Affairs," he said.

Terming the attack on Iran by the U.S. as unnecessary, the Chief Minister said that the U.S. followed "double standards" by advocating peace and also waging war.

## Hakki Pikki people from Angadihalli stuck in Bahrain

**The Hindu Bureau**
SHIVAMOGGA

Recently, a few people from Shivamogga and Davangere districts had travelled to Ghana and got stuck there after local authorities restricted them from selling their products. FILE PHOTO

As many as five tribal persons, belonging to the Hakki Pikki community of Angadihalli in Belur taluk of Hassan, have been stranded in Bahrain after the air strikes in the city following the conflict in West Asia.

Panju, Jamuna, Ratheesh, Veerendra, Pouran, and another person from the village had been to Bahrain recently. In a video message sent to her relatives, Ms. Jamuna said that she and her family members had been to Bahrain to sell hair oil and other plant extracts.

There was an airstrike close to the place that they were living in. A Mangaluru native helped them stay at a safe place temporarily. The lady, in the video message, appealed to the Indian government to come to their rescue.

Many Hakki Pikki people, including those settled in Angadihalli, travel to West Asian and African countries to sell plant extracts. Recently, a few people from Shivamogga and Davangere districts had travelled to Ghana and got stuck there after local authorities restricted them from selling their products.

**Arsikere natives stuck**

Five persons, natives of Arsikere in Hassan district, are stuck in Dubai following the conflict in West Asia.

Jayadev and his four friends had travelled to Dubai to attend an award presentation ceremony conducted by a media house. They were supposed to return by Sunday. However, following the missile attacks, the local administration instructed them not to come out of the hotel, according to a video message they sent to their relatives in Hassan. The confirmed that they are safe and confident of returning once the situation returns to normalcy and flight operations resume.

## CORRIDORS OF POWER

### Nati Koli – flavour of the season

*Nati Koli* (country chicken) appears to be the political flavour of the season. Leaders, whether at breakfast or dinner meetings, seem to prefer *Nati Koli* to other dishes.

MLAs loyal to Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, who gathered at a private hotel to celebrate the birthday of H.C. Balakrishna, MLA for Magadi, enjoyed country chicken while discussing the latest political developments in the State, it is learnt.

A couple of months ago, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Mr. Shivakumar – who have been perceived as rivals over the Chief Ministerial post since the 2023 Assembly elections – shared a meal of *idli*, traditional country-style chicken curry, and coffee at what was dubbed a "power breakfast" meeting.

It seems *Nati Koli* has replaced *ragi mudde* (ragi balls) and *soppina saaru* (spinach sambar), which were much talked about in political circles as the favoured dishes of former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda during such huddles.

### Will Hegde re-enter politics?

Rumours are afloat in political circles that former Union Minister Anant Kumar Hegde *(pictured)*, who represented the Uttara Kannada constituency multiple times in the Lok Sabha, might return to active politics for a "second innings".

Mr. Hegde, who has remained largely detached from politics and BJP organisational activities in recent years, is scheduled to participate as a speaker in the *Hindu Sangama* programme to be held in Bhatkal on March 8.

Bhatkal, considered Mr. Hegde's traditional political bastion, is abuzz with discussions of his revival in public life.

Sources indicate that senior Sangh Parivar leaders have persuaded him to attend the event and subsequently take a more active role in State politics.

### Excited over invite

D. Vedavyasa Kamath *(pictured)*, MLA for Mangaluru City South, was excited to attend the inauguration of the eight-day National SARAS Mela of self-help groups, organised by the Karnataka Rural Livelihood Mission.

He contended that of late, functions related to the opening of new developmental works undertaken by Mangaluru Smart City appeared to be functions of the ruling Congress party, citing the inauguration of the railway underpass in Mahakalipadpu, new indoor games complex in Urwa, artificial turf football ground in Hampankatta, and new urban primary health centre in Jeppu. They were dominated with

attendance of Congress activists, he said.

"In the last 2.5 years, this is the first time I have been invited to a programme. I am glad to receive an invitation from your office," the MLA said, addressing Sharan Prakash Patil, Minister for Medical Education and Skill Development.

"Therefore, I and MP (Capt. Brijesh Chowta) took a flight from Bengaluru this morning and came here," the MLA said in the function, tongue in cheek.

*Nagesh Prabhu*
*Raghava M.*

## Alipur village with historic links mourns death of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

**Darshan Devaiah B.P.**
BENGALURU

As Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei died following a major attack by Israel and the United States, the residents of Alipur village in Gauribidanur taluk of Chickballapur district in Karnataka are gripped by shock, anxiety and grief.

The village, once visited by Khamenei himself, had a rare and deeply personal association with the Iranian leader. He inaugurated a community hospital here in 1981, an event that strengthened Alipur's spiritual connection with Iran. Long before he rose to become Iran's most powerful figure, Khamenei had travelled to Alipur as a 41-year-old cleric in the early years of the Islamic Republic, according to residents.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Shafeeq Abidi, a well-known Urdu poet and former journalist from Alipur, recalled the visit. "Khamenei visited the village as part of the outreach initiatives launched by the government of Ruhollah Khomeini after it assumed power following the 1979 Islamic Revolution," Mr. Abidi said.

"Khamenei inaugurated Imam Khomeini Hospital in Alipur, which is still run by the Anjuman-e-Jafaria Committee in the village. Today we are all in grief and mourning following the death of Khamenei," Mr. Abidi said.

The news of Khamenei's death, confirmed early on Sunday by Iranian state media, has had a profound emotional impact on Alipur.

Located around 70 km from Bengaluru, Alipur has a population of nearly 25,000, of whom an estimated 90% are Shia Muslims. Members of the Shia community called for a protest march and announced three days of mourning, condemning the circumstances surrounding Khamenei's death. The protest has been organised under the leadership of the Anjuman-e-Jafaria Committee.

A procession taken out by residents of Alipur village on Sunday.

Chickballapur Superintendent of Police Kushal Chouksey visited Alipur on Sunday and held discussions with village elders and members of the organising committee to ensure peaceful observance of the mourning period. "About 90% of the population in this village are Shia Muslims, and the rest are around 100 Hindu families. We held a meeting with the Anjuman-e-Jafaria Committee members. They held a prayer meeting on Sunday afternoon, followed by a procession in which around 3,000 people participated, protesting the death of Khamenei," Mr. Chouksey said.

He added that adequate police personnel have been deployed in the village to maintain law and order.

As a mark of protest and mourning, several shops and commercial establishments in Alipur remained voluntarily shut on Sunday. Members of the Shia Muslim community were seen dressed in black and gathering at local mosques and community halls for prayers. Black flags were put up at several locations in the village.

Mr. Abidi said that many youngsters from Alipur travel to Iran to pursue religious education and, in recent years, have also enrolled in MBBS programmes there, as higher education in Iran is comparatively more affordable.

Explaining the village's long-standing cultural and religious connection with Iran, Mr. Abidi said, "Our historical association with Iran dates back to the time of the Adil Shahi dynasty, which ruled the Bijapur Sultanate. As a predominantly Shia Muslim village, we share deep religious ties with Iran, which is a Shia-majority nation".

Meanwhile, concerns are mounting over the safety of villagers currently stranded in Iran amid the escalating conflict in West Asia. According to the police, around 150 people from Alipur are presently in Iran for various purposes, including Islamic theological studies, medical education, pilgrimage, and business activities. Dozens of youths from the village pursue religious studies in Iranian seminaries or attend universities in cities such as Tehran and Mashhad. "We have collected details of those stranded in Iran from Alipur village. There are around 150 people from this village currently there. We have prepared a list and shared it with higher officials and the departments concerned to check on them," Mr. Chouksey said.

However, Mr. Abidi said that most villagers currently in Iran are safe. "As of now, most of our people in Iran are safe and the Indian Embassy is in touch with them, so there are no issues," he said.

**कार्यालय अतिरिक्त मुख्य अभियन्ता सार्वजनिक निर्माण विभाग संभाग-प्रथम, उदयपुर**
क्रमांकः- ACE/NIT/2025-26/D-756 दिनांकः 24/02/2026

**निविदा संख्या- 23/2025-26**

राजस्थान के राज्यपाल महोदय की ओर से **भवन निर्माण कार्य** हेतु उपयुक्त श्रेणी में सार्वजनिक निर्माण विभाग राजस्थान में पंजीकृत संवेदकों एवं राज्य सरकार/केन्द्र सरकार के अधिकृत संगठनों/केन्द्रीय लोक निर्माण विभाग/डाक एवं दूर संचार विभाग/रेल्वे इत्यादि में पंजीकृत संवेदकों, जो कि राजस्थान सरकार के ए, एए श्रेणी के संवेदकों के समकक्ष हो, से निर्धारित प्रपत्र में भवन निर्माण कार्य के लिए ई-प्रोक्यूरमेन्ट प्रक्रिया से ऑनलाईन निविदायें आमंत्रित की जाती हैं।

| | |
|---|---|
| कार्य का नाम | कुल 1 (एक) भवन कार्य |
| निविदा की कुल लागत | राशि रु. 1456.00 लाख |
| ऑनलाईन निविदा आवेदन डाउनलोड एवं अपलोड करने की तारीख | 05.03.2026 प्रातः 9:30 बजे से 24.03.2026 सायं 6.00 बजे तक |
| ऑनलाईन निविदा खोलने की तारीख | 27.03.2026 सायं 4.00 बजे से |

निविदा से सम्बन्धित विवरण वेबसाईट http://dipr.rajasthan.gov.in, http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in व sppp.rajasthan.gov.in पर देखा जा सकता है। सम्पूर्ण निविदा प्रक्रिया http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in पर ऑनलाइन सम्पादित की जावेगी।
NIB Code:- PWD2526A5873, UBN: PWD2526WLOB24297
DIPR/C/4368/2026 अतिरिक्त मुख्य अभियन्ता, सा.नि.वि. सम्भाग-प्रथम उदयपुर

**BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD**

**INVITATION FOR TENDER** (Through KPP Portal Only)

BWSSB invites tenders from eligible contractors for the following works.

| Sl. No. | Division | IFT Number | Amount put to tender / EMD (in Rs.) | Last date & time for Submission of Tender | Date & time for Opening of Tender |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Office of the Chief Engineer (Kaveri-O&M), 8th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bengaluru - 560 009.** | | | | | |
| 1 | (Kaveri O&M)-2 | BWSSB/EE(K-O&M)-2/PB/3048/2025-26 Date: 24.02.2026 (Call-4) | Rs. 54,59,748/- / Rs. 1,10,000/- | 09.03.2026 upto 4:00 p.m. | 10.03.2026 after 5:00 p.m. |
| 2 | | BWSSB/EE(K-O&M)-2/PB/3049/2025-26 Date: 24.02.2026 (Call-4) | Rs. 6,22,543/- / Rs. 20,000/- | | |
| 3 | | BWSSB/EE(K-O&M)-2/PB/3050/2025-26 Date: 24.02.2026 (Call-3) | Rs. 38,32,367/- / Rs. 77,000/- | | |
| 4 | | BWSSB/EE(K-O&M)-2/PB/3051/2025-26 Date: 24.02.2026 | Rs. 13,13,985/- / Rs. 33,000/- | | |
| **Sd/- Executive Engineer (Kaveri-Operation & Maintenance)-2.** | | | | | |
| **Office of the Chief Engineer (West), 6th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bengaluru - 560 009.** | | | | | |
| 5 | West-2 | BWSSB/EE(W-2)/PB/5658/2025-26 Date: 26.02.2026 (Call-4) | Rs. 72,31,807/- / Rs. 1,44,700/- | 10.03.2026 upto 3:00 p.m. | 11.03.2026 after 3:00 p.m. |
| 6 | | BWSSB/EE(W-2)/PB/5658/2025-26 Date: 26.02.2026 (Call-2) (Reserved for IIA Category) | Rs. 65,28,649/- / Rs. 65,300/- | | |
| **Sd/- Executive Engineer (West -2).** | | | | | |

**The details regarding the tender and participation in the e-procurement portal process can be obtained by logging on to https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in. For further details contact the above signed office during working hours.**
DIPR/CP/RA/5914/2025-26

**KARNATAKA SLUM DEVELOPMENT BOARD**
Executive Engineer's Office, Division - 1
No.55 Risaldar Road, Seshadripuram, Bangalore-560020.
E-mail: ksdbeeno.1@gmail.com Ph: 08023564652

No.KSDB/EE/No1.div/S.T/PB/IFT-19/2025-26/ Dated: 25.02.2026

**SHORT-TERM TENDER**
(via KPP portal)

Tenders have been invited through KPP Portal for 04 works (KW-2&3&4) in the Karnataka Slum Development Board 1st Division, Bangalore. The indent number of the said works is given below.

**01. KSDB/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT436**
**02. KSDB/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT437**
**03. KSDB/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT438**
**04. KSDB/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT439**

**1).** Last date & time for receipt of Tenders: **Date: 05.03.2026 upto 4.00 PM**, **2).** Date & Time for opening of Technical Bid **Date:-07.03.2026 at 11.00 AM**.

Further details may be obtained from the Executive Engineer, Division-1, Karnataka Slum Development Board, Bangalore or from **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in.**

Sign/-
**Executive Engineer**
Division -1, KSDB, Bangalore

DIPR/CP/NR/5922/2025-26

CACHE

In the lower atmosphere, a returning capsule can still reach hundreds of kilometres per hour, far too fast for a safe landing, so the parachute has to be deployed to reduce the velocity for a soft landing in the sea. PTI

# How do astronauts return from space and survive re-entry?

A launch vehicle's ascent battles gravity to gain orbital velocity, while re-entry is a controlled struggle against the atmosphere to systematically shed that immense kinetic energy through aerobraking, thermal protection and precise guidance within the re-entry corridor

Unnikrishnan Nair S.

The ascent of a launch vehicle is a battle against gravity to gain the immense velocity required to stay in orbit – while re-entry is a struggle against the atmosphere to shed that same energy in a systematic way.

Initially, aerospace scientists believed that surviving atmospheric re-entry would be impossible because the massive kinetic energy of an orbiting space capsule would be converted into intense heat energy upon re-entry. The resulting temperatures would be so extreme that they would melt any known structural material. The breakthrough came with the blunt body theory, which proved that if the space capsule's forebody is rounded with a large radius, it can deflect most of the re-entry heat into the surrounding air rather than being directed into the capsule.

More than 98% energy of a re-entering capsule is dissipated through the atmosphere and converted into heat. The capsule is shielded from this intense thermal environment by its heatshield, which has a robust thermal protection system: it dissipates the heat through either ablation – where the material sacrificially chars and erodes to carry heat away – or thermal insulation, which uses low-conductivity materials to prevent the heat from reaching the capsule's primary structure.

**What is a re-entry corridor?**
To return to earth, a space capsule must break its orbit by reducing its velocity. It does this by performing a deorbit burn: turning 180 degrees and firing its engines in the opposite direction of its travel.

Since forward speed is what maintains the orbit, losing that speed allows gravity to overcome the capsule's centrifugal force. The capsule then drops out of its stable circular path and enters a shallow, downward elliptical curve, leading it into the upper atmosphere for re-entry.

The re-entry corridor is a precise atmospheric window that a spacecraft must hit to return safely, balanced between two extremes. If the entry angle is too shallow (the overshoot boundary), the capsule will act like a stone skipping across a pond, bouncing off the atmosphere back into space. Conversely, if the angle is too steep (the undershoot boundary), the capsule will hit the dense air too hard, generating lethal deceleration forces and frictional heat that exceed what the crew and capsule can survive.

**What is a semi-ballistic body?**
A ballistic body behaves like a falling stone: it cannot steer by itself and is slowed only by the air resistance (drag). In contrast, a semi-ballistic body flies at a specific angle, known as the angle of attack. This is achieved by intentionally offsetting its centre of gravity laterally, causing the body to fly at an angle relative to the oncoming air.

As the vehicle slams into the atmosphere at hypersonic speeds, this angle forces the air to flow asymmetrically over the body, creating an aerodynamic lift force apart from the drag force, which acts perpendicular to the direction of velocity. This lift force is strategically manipulated to allow the capsule to glide and bank through the atmosphere, providing the cross-range capability necessary to steer it precisely toward a targeted landing zone.

**What is a communication blackout?**
Another issue during re-entry is the communication blackout. The extreme heat generated during re-entry strips electrons from air molecules, turning it into a layer of ionised plasma. This plasma sheath acts like a metallic bubble around the capsule that reflects and blocks radio waves. Because signals cannot pass through this electrified layer, it causes a communication blackout, leaving the crew and ground control unable to speak to each other until the capsule slows down enough for the plasma to vanish.

To manage the dreaded communication blackout during re-entry, engineers utilise a combination of orbital relay networks and high-frequency signal physics. By transmitting data upward to relay satellites (such as NASA's TDRSS) rather than downward to ground stations, the signal passes through the thinner, less dense regions of the plasma sheath in the rear of the capsule.

**Why are parachutes deployed for landing?**
When a capsule re-enters the atmosphere, it is decelerated by aerobraking, which is the process of using atmospheric drag to slow down a capsule. As the air density increases at lower altitudes, the capsule's speed drops until it approaches its terminal velocity – the point where the upward force of air resistance balances the downward pull of gravity. Any further reduction in velocity has to be achieved by deploying additional aerodynamic surfaces like parachutes. For a capsule returning from space, the terminal velocity in the lower atmosphere is still hundreds of kilometres per hour, far too fast for a safe landing.

Practically, even before reaching the terminal velocity, the parachute has to be deployed to reduce the velocity further to make a soft landing in the sea.

**How will the Gaganyaan crew module re-enter?**
ISRO pioneered its re-entry capabilities with the 2007 Space Capsule Recovery Experiment (SRE), proving it could safely return an orbiting craft to earth. This was further advanced by the 2014 Crew Module Atmospheric Re-entry Experiment (CARE), which validated the full-scale thermal protection and parachute systems essential for surviving the extreme heat of a sub-orbital re-entry.

The Gaganyaan orbital module has two parts: the crew module (CM) and the service module (SM). The orbital module will be de-orbited by the thrusters in the SM and after that, the SM will separate and be destroyed by the intense heat of re-entry. Upon atmospheric re-entry, the CM maintains its trajectory within the re-entry corridor, strictly avoiding undershoot and overshoot boundaries. Operating as a semi-ballistic body, the CM executes controlled manoeuvres to reach its targeted landing site by modulating its lift vector through bi-propellant thruster firings.

Once the module reaches lower altitudes, a three-stage redundant parachute system is deployed to ensure a safe and smooth splashdown in the Bay of Bengal, which is the primary landing zone for the mission.

*Unnikrishnan Nair S. is Former Director, VSSC and IIST; Founding Director, HSFC; and an expert in launch vehicle systems, orbital re-entry and human spaceflight technologies. Currently Dr Sarabhai Professor at VSSC*

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

## A quiz on the Ranji Trophy 2025-26 season that concluded last week

V.V. Ramanan

**QUESTION 1**
How many different teams prior to Jammu & Kashmir have won the Ranji Trophy?

**QUESTION 2**
Which bowler finished the season with 60 wickets?

**QUESTION 3**
Which team made it to the semifinals for the first time in its history?

**QUESTION 4**
Who won the Plate Championship for the 2025-26 season by defeating Manipur by a massive margin of 568 runs in the final?

**QUESTION 5**
What remarkable feat did Arjun Sharma and Mohit Jhangra of the Services achieve for the first time in the 91-year history of the Ranji Trophy in the match against Assam?

**QUESTION 6**
The highest individual score in the 2025-26 Ranji Trophy season was the 299 recorded by a batter from a team which made the last four. Name the batter and team.

**QUESTION 7**
Who was named Player-of-the-tournament?

**Visual Question:**
Name this batter who amassed the most runs this season (950). EMMANUAL YOGINI

**Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:** 1. An early Steinbeck novel, this book portrays a group of 'paisanos'— literally, countrymen — a small band of errant friends enjoying life, and wine, in the days after the end of World War I. Name the book. **Ans: *Tortilla Flat***
2. Steinbeck himself considered this book his magnum opus. The novel brings to life the intricate details of two families, the Trasks and the Hamiltons, and their interwoven stories. Name the book. **Ans: *East of Eden***
3. *The Grapes of Wrath* focuses on a poor family called the Joads. Which famous prize did this book win? **Ans: Pulitzer Prize**
4. Which American philosopher influenced Steinbeck's writing, including the characters of Doc and Friend Ed? **Ans: Ed Ricketts**
5. In which year did Steinbeck win the Nobel Prize for literature? **Ans:1962**
Visual: Identify the film that was adapted from a novel of the same name written by Steinbeck. **Ans: *The Grapes of Wrath***
**Early Birds:** Dodo Jayaditya | Arun Kumar Singh | Varghese Joseph | Sachin Thukral | Sadhan Panda

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

## *She barged in on their conversation*

Then complained the cafe was overpriced, though it was simply expensive

S. Upendran

**What is the meaning and origin of the expression 'to barge in on'? (S. Jambunathan, Coorg)**
When you 'barge in on someone', you intrude on the individual; you walk into their room without their permission – very often, upsetting the person. You interrupt, quite rudely, whatever it is the person is doing. It is also possible to 'barge in on someone's conversation'. When you do this, you rudely interrupt a conversation that two people are having; you poke your nose into something that you have no business doing.

*From now on, make it a point to knock. Don't just barge in.*

The expression can also be used to mean 'to bump into or collide with someone or something'. In this case, you 'barge into someone or something'.

*I nearly barged into Tara as I was turning the corner.*

'Barge' comes from the Latin '*bara*' meaning 'boat', and the word was initially used to refer to any small boat. Over a period of time, however, the word underwent a change in meaning. Today, it is mostly used to refer to any flat-bottomed vessel, mainly used to transport cargo. These vessels are mostly found on rivers and canals and are incapable of independent movement. Being big and heavy (because of the cargo they are carrying), they are usually towed or pulled by other boats, any attempt to quickly change direction or come to an abrupt stop usually results in an accident, with the barge sometimes colliding with the boat towing it.

**What is the difference between 'overpriced' and 'expensive'? (Aparna Das, Puri)**
'Expensive' is the opposite of 'cheap'; when you buy a product that is 'expensive', you are paying a lot of money for it. In addition to hinting at the price of the product, the use of the word also suggests something about the quality and value of the product. When you say that something is 'expensive', you are suggesting that given the quality of the product, it is worth the money you are paying for it. In other words, you are getting your money's worth. We must, however, remember that 'expensive' is a relative term. What you and I may consider 'expensive', someone else may not.

*Sandeep has a big collection of very expensive watches.*

The use of the word 'overpriced' suggests that you are passing judgment on a product – you are saying it is not worth the money that you are being asked to pay. While the product may not be expensive, you are being made to pay a lot more than it is worth. You are being made to pay way too much money for a product of low value.

*I couldn't talk my friend out of buying a pair of ridiculously overpriced shoes.*

*I looked at the menu and walked out. Every item in the restaurant was overpriced.*

*upendrankye@gmail.com*

## Word of the day

**Trepidation:**
a feeling of alarm or dread

Synonyms: worry, unease, panic

Usage: *She waited with trepidation for the phone call.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/trepidationpro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /trɛpɪdeɪʃən/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

## From Page One

# A map to guide you to places in Bengaluru where pink Tabebuia trees are in full bloom

The census catalogues around 21,000 trees across the city, providing a robust base to map Tabebuia trees more accurately.

**Community-driven model**

The bloom-tracking system works through a community-driven model supported by two data sources: GBA's census data and user contributions.

Residents can search for trees near them through the census layer or add new bloom sightings, even in areas where census data may not exist. Users can upload images, indicate the number of trees blooming, and specify the stage of flowering.

The website incorporates an automated lifecycle progression to reflect the natural blooming pattern of Tabebuia. Once a bloom is added, it moves through defined stages, 'budding' to 'partial' in four days, 'partial' to 'peak' in three days, 'peak' to 'full glory' in two days, and finally to 'fading' after four days, mirroring the flower's short but striking lifecycle.

Launched on February 22, the response has exceeded expectations. Within a week, the site recorded over 20,000 visits and about 500 community spottings. "I never expected it to grow beyond a personal hobby project. The community support has been incredible," he said.

Interestingly, some users have found practical benefits beyond photography and leisure walks. As Tabebuia trees contribute to pollen levels, a few residents shared that the app helps them plan outings to avoid clusters of blooming trees, a use case Mr. Mohammed had not anticipated.

While the current focus is on Tabebuia rosea, he envisions the platform evolving into a broader seasonal tracker. "I see it scaling to cover different blooming seasons across Bengaluru. The more people use it, the more accurate and useful the data becomes," he noted.

Beyond aesthetics, the initiative could foster greater urban biodiversity awareness.

"Even I am learning along the way about the different trees and flowering seasons in our city. I hope it encourages people to appreciate and preserve Bengaluru's green heritage," he said.

His message to Bengalureans is simple: "Enjoy the pink blossom season while it lasts. It is a reminder of the natural beauty our city still holds".

# Fireworks unit blast exposes laxity in ensuring safety steps

Rules recommended by the probe panel in the aftermath of a deadly firecracker accident in A.P. last year had reportedly not been followed leading to a second tragedy in barely five months

**M. Sambasiva Rao**
AMARAVATI

Twenty people died in a blast at a firecrackers unit in Kakinada district, Andhra Pradesh on Saturday. PTI

In the wake of the accident that killed 20 people at the Sri Surya Firecrackers complex at Vetlapalem village in Kakinada district of Andhra Pradesh on Saturday, serious questions have resurfaced on the implementation of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) recommended by a two-member Inquiry Committee constituted by the Andhra Pradesh government in October last year.

Despite comprehensive directions, accidents continue to occur, allegedly due to non-compliance by both enforcement agencies and manufacturers. Most of the rules prescribed by the committee were reportedly not followed by Sri Surya Fire Crackers, underscoring systemic lapses.

The committee was formed following a devastating explosion at Sri Ganapathi Grand Fireworks in Rayavaram village of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Konaseema district on October 8, 2025, which claimed ten lives and caused extensive property damage.

The committee proposed a two-tier framework – policy reforms and operational SOPs. It called for a unified digital portal, the Andhra Pradesh Fireworks Licensing and Monitoring System (APFLMS), integrating licensing, inspections and compliance tracking across departments. Joint inspections by Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO), Fire Services, Labour and District Administration were made mandatory.

A composite Fireworks Operation Licence, risk-based categorisation and a Fireworks Risk Index (FRI) were recommended to prioritise high-risk units.

The District Fireworks Safety Committee (DFSC), chaired by the Collector, is tasked with quarterly inspections, maintaining a district risk register, and suspending licences for persistent violations.

The committee's warning was unequivocal: without strict adherence by both government machinery and manufacturers, regulatory provisions will remain on paper and preventable tragedies will continue to claim lives.

## Firecracker business thrives amid safety concerns, demand

**M. Sambasiva Rao**
AMARAVATI

The multi-crore firecracker manufacturing business has come under sharp focus following the accident at a firecracker factory in Kakinada district on Saturday.

The tragedy has once again drawn attention to the rapid expansion of the sector, driven by soaring demand across Andhra Pradesh.

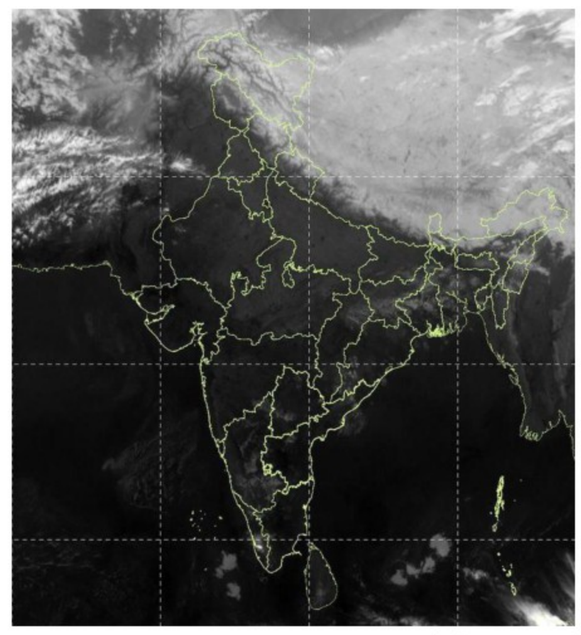
As the demand steadily rises, firecracker units are spreading across the length and breadth of the State, transforming the sector into a quick multi-crore enterprise, generating revenue and employment.

However, with expansion comes responsibility. Observers stress that while the industry should be encouraged for its economic contribution and employment generation, the government must strictly enforce safety regulations to prevent recurring accidents and protect lives.

It is also observed that the prices of firecrackers are often fixed at five to 10 times of their actual value, which provides huge margins for the sellers.

## WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

**Forecast for Monday:** Strong surface winds (speed reaching 20-30 kmph) very likely over Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh

| CITY | RAIN | MAX | MIN | CITY | RAIN | MAX | MIN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Agartala | — | 32.2 | 19.3 | Kozhikode | -- | 35.0 | 24.8 |
| Ahmedabad | — | 34.2 | 21.2 | Kurnool | -- | 37.0 | 24.0 |
| Aizawl | — | 31.0 | 11.0 | Lucknow | -- | 32.5 | 16.0 |
| Allahabad | — | 32.8 | 17.2 | Madurai | -- | 36.6 | 20.9 |
| Bengaluru | — | — | 19.2 | Mangaluru | -- | 31.7 | 23.2 |
| Bhopal | — | — | 15.1 | Mumbai | -- | 31.8 | 21.5 |
| Bhubaneswar | — | 36.2 | 23.2 | Mysuru | -- | 33.2 | 20.6 |
| Chandigarh | — | 29.1 | 12.1 | New Delhi | -- | 30.8 | 14.4 |
| Chennai | — | 33.7 | 23.4 | Patna | -- | 31.4 | 19.1 |
| Coimbatore | — | 34.4 | 21.6 | Port Blair | -- | 30.6 | 23.1 |
| Dehradun | — | 29.7 | 12.8 | Puducherry | -- | 32.2 | 22.6 |
| Gangtok | 28.0 | 12.1 | 9.3 | Pune | -- | 35.2 | 18.7 |
| Goa | — | 32.4 | 20.8 | Raipur | -- | 35.6 | 22.2 |
| Guwahati | — | 26.6 | 18.2 | Ranchi | -- | 30.8 | 12.0 |
| Hubballi | -- | 35 | 18.3 | Shillong | -- | 20.2 | 8.4 |
| Hyderabad | — | 34.8 | 21.5 | Shimla | -- | 18.5 | 9.2 |
| Imphal | — | 26.2 | 9.5 | Srinagar | -- | 21.0 | 1.4 |
| Jaipur | — | — | 18.0 | Thiruvananthapuram | 4.0 | 33.6 | 23.0 |
| Kochi | — | 31.0 | 25.6 | Tiruchi | -- | 35.1 | 22.4 |
| Kohima | — | 18.5 | 9.2 | Vijayawada | -- | 35.5 | 23.0 |
| Kolkata | — | 33.6 | 33.6 | Visakhapatnam | -- | 31.0 | 23.8 |

*(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)*

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

| CITIES | $SO_2$ | $NO_2$ | CO | PM2.5 | PM10 | CODE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ahmedabad | .27 | ..58 | 41 | ..... 88 | ...145 | |
| Bengaluru | .25 | ..12 | 24 | ..... 62 | ...114 | |
| Chennai | ...6 | ..13 | 52 | ... 131 | ...146 | |
| Delhi | ..— | ..87 | 26 | ... 166 | ...144 | |
| Hyderabad | .15 | ..12 | 61 | ..... 66 | ...108 | |
| Kolkata | ...8 | ..74 | 39 | ..... 99 | ...100 | |
| Lucknow | ...5 | ..28 | 32 | ... 206 | ...125 | |
| Mumbai | ...3 | ..21 | 21 | ..... 33 | ....95 | |
| Pune | ..— | ..96 | 40 | ..... 58 | ....84 | |
| Visakhapatnam | .47 | ..91 | 30 | ... 144 | ...158 | |

**Yesterday**

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Charkhi Dadri, Haryana recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 296 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir recorded a healthy AQI score of 30

**Air Quality Code:** Poor | Moderate | Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

**$SO_2$:** Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

**$NO_2$:** Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

**CO:** Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

**PM2.5 & PM10:** Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

## Imperial war

### American and Israeli thuggery has no place in the international system

Donald Trump came to the White House promising to end America's endless wars. That promise now lies in ashes in West Asia. The far-right Republican, who, along with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, launched an all-out war against Iran on February 28 and killed its Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has proved to be one of the most reckless warmongers ever to occupy the Oval Office. Blood is on the hands of these two men – one a mercurial hard nationalist who is turning America into a rogue superpower, and the other, an expansionist ethnonationalist wanted for war crimes by the International Criminal Court. Mr. Trump has bombed at least seven countries in the 13 months that he has been in office. Under Mr. Netanyahu, Israel has operated far outside the boundaries of international law. Iran has responded with missile and drone attacks, targeting Israeli and American bases in the Persian Gulf and Jordan, that risks widening the war. Tehran has also announced the closure of the critical Strait of Hormuz, a move that risks a global economic fallout, especially for major oil importers such as India.

To be clear, this is not a "pre-emptive" war, as Israel has claimed. There was no evidence that Iran was preparing to launch an attack. On the contrary, Tehran was involved in serious negotiations with Washington under Omani mediation. On February 27, Oman's Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi said that a deal was within reach, based on Iran's commitment not to build a bomb or stockpile nuclear material. Within hours, American and Israeli missiles struck Iran, killing its head of state and top leaders. This is not the first time that diplomacy has been overtaken by force. In 2018, Mr. Trump single-handedly sabotaged the 2015 nuclear agreement. In June 2025, while Iran was negotiating with the U.S., Israel launched a unilateral attack, triggering the 12-day war. This time, however, the attack is far more dangerous. This war is not about giving Iranians their "freedom" either, as Mr. Trump has claimed. The U.S. maintains close ties with several repressive monarchies and dictatorships, where freedom rarely enters the equation. Nor has Washington shown any qualms about Israel's crimes against the defenceless, stateless Palestinian people. This is a war of choice, launched to eliminate an adversary and reshape the region to suit American and Israeli interests. Such thuggery cannot be accepted in the international system. The war machines of the imperial duo have already wrecked the region. Before the fire spreads further, this war must end. America should step back and Israel must be reined in. Otherwise, even the last vestige of the rules-based order will be shredded entirely.

## Selective outrage

### Judiciary seems quick to take offence only when it sees itself under attack

The Supreme Court Bench that took up the NCERT Class 8 social science textbook case might have overreacted when it saw the critical references to the judiciary as a "deep-seated conspiracy" and declared that it will not allow "anyone on earth" to tarnish the judiciary's integrity. While the government has expressed remorse, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's statement that action will be taken against officials responsible for inserting references to case pendency and "judicial corruption" is an exercise in executive arbitrariness prompted by judicial overreach. In fairness to the Court, it would likely not have taken offence to the passages had these had been in any other book. But textbooks are official, authoritative accounts and the judiciary found the passages ill-motivated. Instances of judicial corruption are real and censoring textbooks is not a corrective measure.

Since the BJP came to power, rewriting school and college textbooks has been a key part of its agenda. Right-wing commentators often find court judgments, such as those giving precedence to the environment as against development, or worse, as against religious practices of Hindus, and therefore not nationalistic or beneficial to the vast majority of the people of India. An adviser to the Prime Minister recently called the judiciary the single biggest obstacle to development. The Court, perhaps, saw the textbook as an attempt to intimidate the judiciary. Some of the sentences were indeed in the form of broad-brushing social media assertions not carefully constructed with rigour. The textbook, for instance, said, "People do experience corruption at various levels of the judiciary" and went on to describe complaints and redress mechanisms. But, such critical references had been used in chapters dealing with the government or the political executive as well. The chapter on elections had a picture of currency notes apparently found in the car of a candidate. The textbook writers probably aimed to spark critical awareness, not offer bland tutorials in civic studies. But as with other textbooks, there are problematic passages. The many history chapters uncritically valorise medieval Hindu kingdoms and portray their struggle to retain power as rightful resistances to Muslim rule. Wars for plunder and territorial expansion have always been part of history, and they did not begin with Muslim invaders. Chapters on Muslim kingdoms briefly refer to Akbar's tolerance and Babur's intellectual curiosity but remain largely negative. The chapter on penury under British rule and Mughal-era wealth is not balanced. The problem is not that the textbook selectively targets the judiciary; it is that the judiciary selectively targets certain portions.

# Sixteenth Finance Commission — misses and concerns

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is a former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India and Chairman of the Twelfth Finance Commission

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Evaluating the federal implications of the Sixteenth Finance Commission recommendations

The Sixteenth Finance Commission had significant flexibility in determining its approach and methodology, as its terms of reference followed directly from constitutional provisions, unlike earlier commissions that operated under detailed central directives. This Commission, as before, addressed the two key dimensions of fiscal transfers – namely the vertical and the horizontal.

**The vertical dimension**

The Commission took note of the increase in the share of States in the divisible pool of central taxes from 32% to 42% by the Fourteenth Finance Commission. The Fourteenth Finance Commission had justified it on account of a discontinuation of State plan grants, amounting to only 3% of the divisible pool of central taxes at the time of transition. The subsequent reduction to 41% was due to the change in the status of Jammu and Kashmir. The Sixteenth Finance Commission noted the Centre's concern about the reduction in its fiscal space. The Centre had responded to this substantial increase in the share of states by the Fourteenth Finance Commission by, first, increasing the non-shareable cesses and surcharges, second, reducing its share in the financing of centrally sponsored schemes and third, not accepting sector-specific/State-specific grants recommended by the Fifteenth Finance Commission. In the end, however, the Sixteenth Finance Commission retained the States' share at 41%, imparting to it a kind of semi-permanence.

The Sixteenth Finance Commission makes no recommendations regarding the non-shareable cesses and surcharges which, by their very nature, should be limited and levied for finite periods. These should be earmarked for specific purposes and not merged with the Centre's general funds. Instead, Sixteenth Finance Commission recommended a 'grand bargain' (paragraph 7.67) between the Centre and States saying that 'States would agree to a smaller share in the resulting larger divisible pool, with no loss of revenues to either side' provided the Centre agreed to merge a large part of the cesses and surcharges in the regular taxes.

The Commission did not take into account its constitutional duty as enumerated in Articles 270 and 280 for objectively determining the share of States in the shareable pool of central taxes while making its observations on the cesses and surcharges. It would have been better had the Commission at least pointed out to the Centre that the steep increase in cesses and surcharges was not warranted and not in the spirit of the Constitution. Further, the Commission chose to discontinue the revenue deficit grants and did not recommend any State and sector specific grants. This became a route to lower the share of States in the Centre's revenue receipts as compared to the Fifteenth Finance Commission.

The average effective transfers covering tax devolution and Finance Commission grants to the States as a percentage of the Centre's pre-transfer gross revenue receipts were 27.0%, 27.2% and 28.3%, respectively during the Finance Commission periods (11, 12, 13). This share increased sharply to 35.6% during the Fourteenth Finance Commission period. In the Fifteenth Finance Commission period, covering the years 2020-21 to 2024-25, this share came down marginally to 34.4%, still considerably higher than those of the Eleventh and Thirteenth Finance Commission periods. This steep increase in resources transferred as a proportion of gross revenue receipts of the Centre should not be overlooked.

Looking at the first year of the Sixteenth Finance Commission's award period, 2026-27, this ratio is 32.7% as per the Centre's budget estimates. The Sixteenth Finance Commission's projections for later years may prove to be overestimates since the 2026-27 nominal GDP growth, assumed at 11%, is higher than the Budget estimate of 10%. The Commission also did not factor in the revenue reducing effect of the major Goods and Services Tax (GST) reforms undertaken in September 2025, while the Commission was still in session.

**Horizontal dimension**

The Sixteenth Finance Commission introduced a new criterion of contribution to reflect an efficiency consideration. But it measured it through the share of a State's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) in an all-State GSDP.

There is a need, however, to differentiate the efficiency of the production system from that of the fiscal system. In the production system, the inter-State distribution of GSDP depends on many factors which includes the inter-State movement of financial and human resources. It largely depends on market forces which tend to lead to a concentration of productive capital stock in a limited number of States. Human resources also move from less developed to the more developed States.

This change involved using GSDP in two opposite ways. In the income distance formula, the lower the per-capita GSDP of a State, the higher the per-capita share of that State. In the contribution criterion, the higher the per-capita GSDP of a State, the higher is its share. However, the Commission did not finally use the GSDP. Instead, it used its square root. This was meant to reduce the excessive effects of using GSDP to reflect contribution on some States.

In the devolution formula, the weights of some of the other criteria have also been changed. These are purely judgemental. Dropping the tax effort/fiscal discipline criterion, which was a fiscal efficiency criterion is not consistent with the Commission's own narrative.

**Losses and gains**

Consequently, the main States that have lost on account of the Sixteenth Finance Commission devolution scheme as compared to the Fifteenth Finance Commission are Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan. The other group of losing States are Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, Sikkim, and Goa (the north-east or extremely small States). The gain by other richer States has not been uniform.

Ideally, the losses of some States could have been mitigated through normatively determined revenue gap grants. Devolution is not enough to capture the finer details of cost and need differentials of India's highly differentiated States. Further, if a Finance Commission changes the tax devolution formulae, then the consequential loss of some of the States could be neutralised by the revenue gap grants.

In fact, Article 275 provides an important mode of fiscal transfers for the consideration of State-specific 'needs'. It should not be confused with revenue deficits. Needs can be estimated in order to equalise standards of critical services such as health and education.

This would have facilitated accommodating the performance argument of the richer States while still promoting the equalisation objective. Even if there are difficulties in estimating revenue gap grants since it involves normative assessment of States' needs and resources, the Sixteenth Finance Commission need not have taken the shortcut of dropping these altogether. While ad hoc State-specific grants are not appropriate, equalisation grants still have a place.

*The views expressed are personal*

# Skill India as herculean challenges, Galgotian blunders

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**A. Singh**

is a computer engineer, has a Masters in Business Administration from the Indian School of Business (ISB), Hyderabad, and is a skills practitioner

Reforming skill financing is crucial to harness India's demographic dividend

A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity requires a herculean effort. India's demographic dividend, that ends by 2040, is one such opportunity. Several European Union countries and China have successfully financed skill systems. In these countries, approximately 50% of secondary-level students are enrolled in vocational education streams. In India that share is 1.3%, reflective of an educational system that neglected school education till 1990, and vocational education till 2006.

However, in 2020, India's National Education Policy (NEP) said: "By 2025, 50% learners will be exposed to vocational education." "Exposed" still reveals an attitudinal problem among policy designers. Vocational education in most countries is around 2% of the education budget. For China and Germany it is 11%. India has no data that is publicly available due to fragmented training schemes in Ministries. India's strategy rests on Budget announcements which falter year-on-year. A scheme that was celebrated last year is forgotten the next year. Consider the internship scheme announced in Budget FY 2026: only 5% of the allocated funds were spent and its design proved ineffective.

**CAG reports, issues raised**

The herculean task of making India "the skill capital of the world" is inconsistent with "Galgotian" blunders. Issues of financing skills are crucial. The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) in 2025 audited the flagship Skill India scheme, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)-2015-22. Ten years ago, it had similarly looked at compliance and oversight issues of skill institutions.

Both reports raise issues of financial impropriety. In 2015, the CAG dealt with financial reporting delays and unclear accountability of disbursed funds. In 2025, the report mentions that 94.5% of bank accounts were invalid and approximately 41% of trainees in short-term training achieved placement.

How have we evolved from 2015 through 2025? When the short-term skill ecosystem was started, the vision was to create a vibrant public-private market for skills. Over the past decade, however, the focus on quantity through short-term training has yielded limited results. Since the CAG's direct concern is fund use, we list three ideas for it.

Imagine a scenario where no operational funding was provided by the PMKVY. What if the amount upward of ₹10,000 crore spent annually was extended as skill loans to students? This would have led to more choices for students, improved the quality of institutions as they competed for enrolment, and promoted demand-driven skill development, benefiting students as they are from economically weaker backgrounds. A model similar to that for educational loans could have been followed. The worst case would be non-performing assets, which we have ways to handle. It is not too late. We can do so now and use skill loans better. There is already a policy framework in place. Priority needs to shift: part of PMKVY funding could be through skill loans. Of course, design work is needed to roll this out, but it is doable. It needs a product-market that has banks and non-banking financial companies on board. It is worth questioning why the National Skill Development Corporation began as a non-banking finance company, later became a funder for training partners, and now primarily implements government schemes.

**Using skill vouchers**

Use of skill vouchers is another trainee-based skills financing idea, more so for distribution of public funds. It allows flexibility for policymakers and a choice for students. There is no better way to implement the NEP priority of lifelong learning.

Since vouchers follow the trainee rather than the institution, it incentivises delivery and outcomes. It creates a competitive market. Vouchers can also be good tools to provide upskilling for Artificial Intelligence (AI)-led transition, providing targeted skills in AI, digital and green skills. They can be used for needed segments such as enhancing women workforce participation or provide foreign language learning for global labour markets.

Purchasing power in the hands of learners will drive quality and accountability and be a driver of a demand-based skills market. Singapore and Croatia have implemented them well. It will also encourage school leavers to pursue vocational courses instead of defaulting to degrees, which often inflate tertiary enrolment.

**The idea of skill levies**

Skill levies on organised industries, used in more than 90-plus countries, is another fundamental idea. A well-designed skills levy can sustainably finance skills. In 2017, we had designed and recommended a Reimbursable Industry Contribution (RIC) to the Government of India for the Twelfth Five Year plan. At that time there were 62-plus countries doing it; now, 90-plus have adopted it, for good reasons.

Across Latin America, in Germany, Singapore, South Africa and South Korea, such models have been used to ensure industry ownership of skills and to create stable funding insulated from political and budgetary cycles. Linking contributions to firm size and payroll and then returning them to the industry when training has happened makes employers in-charge of skill development.

Today, skills programmes are supply-driven and government-financed.

Employer engagement in today's system is inadequate. We can move from an employer-engaged to an employer-owned system through the RIC reform. It is tested world-wide and there is a small demographic window for this policy choice.

Finally, real time skills demand must feed into policy. Understanding this trajectory needs transparent rules. A mandate for online job boards to share data in a form that safeguards their business interest but also provides aggregate understanding to the government is needed. Data mining and AI modelling can help. Periodic/one-off skill gap studies (as has been the norm) cannot achieve this goal. The data shared can be made public in the National Career Service (NCS) portal. India's goal to construct a labour market information system has not materialised. This may be the only workable way for skills planning.

Enough strategic errors have been made. By 2040, the demographic dividend will end. It is time for a course correction – we know we can. We hope, we will.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**Iran attacked**

The U.S.-Israel assault on Iran is best understood as an economic war, not merely a security operation. The architecture goes back to Richard Nixon's petrodollar deal of 1973 — oil priced in dollars, OPEC surpluses recycled into US Treasuries. The 1979 Iranian Revolution was intolerable precisely because it shattered this arrangement, creating the first major oil state outside dollar subservience. Since then, the pattern is consistent — Iraq in 2003, Libya in 2011, Iran today — each had challenged dollar dominance. U.S. President Donald Trump is defending the same financial order, whatever his rhetoric. Until we debate this economic dimension honestly, we will keep misreading these conflicts entirely.

**Gopalaswamy J.,**
Chennai

The U.S. has this tendency to call North Korea, Iran and others as rogue states because they challenge America's hegemonic ways. In fact, rogue nations are not those that intend to or possess nuclear weapons, but those which attack others on flimsy or unfounded grounds. At a time when the Russian war in Ukraine is on, the strikes on Iran will prove catastrophic for security in West Asia.
It is the U.S. that always indulges in aggressive sabre-rattling and unprovoked military interventions across the world.

**Prabhu Raj R.,**
Bengaluru

The killing of Iran's Ali Khamenei is a blatant violation by the U.S. The U.S. under Mr. Trump is becoming a rogue country. With the UN long valueless, the world is becoming a dangerous place.

**V. Ganapathy Subramanian,**
Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu

**Corrections & Clarifications**

The photo caption that accompanied a report, "President undertakes sortie in Prachand" (Inside pages, February 28, 2026), erroneously identified Group Captain N.S. Bahua as Air Chief Marshal A.P. Singh.

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# How UGC rules prioritise quick justice

**Furqan Qamar**
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The University Grants Commission's (UGC) 2026 regulation on the promotion of equity in higher education has triggered protests by a section of general category students and a *Sadhu sangathan* (organisation of ascetics). The matter finally reached the Supreme Court which has put the implementation on hold for its complete vagueness.

Opposition to the regulation stems from the apprehension that marginalised sections, taking advantage of the vagueness in the new rules, might misuse the regulation to victimise upper castes. This reflects deep distrust and insecurity which is fuelled by fears that measures aimed at providing justice to one section of the population could turn out to be unjust for others.

**Caution against speedy justice**

This regulation is necessitated by an undeniable reality. Caste, gender and religion-based discrimination in higher educational institutions are neither sporadic nor episodic, and instances of the same have lately been rising. Grievance redress mechanisms have been notoriously slow, often discretionary, and at times only symbolic, leaving students from marginalised communities to suffer the consequences in silence.

Even the most ardent opponents of this new regulation cannot, therefore, deny the necessity of such an intervention. Their consternation arises from the apprehension that the overemphasis on speed to meaningfully deliver justice in institutions shaped by layered hierarchies, informal power, and uneven capacities might be misplaced, as speed and justice share a very complicated relationship. Too slow, and it loses meaning; too fast, it risks losing judgment altogether.

The 2026 regulations insist on swift redress, strict accountability, and institutional consequences for silence or inaction. Complaints must be acknowledged immediately, committees convened swiftly, and inquiries concluded within rigid timelines. This design rests on a powerful assumption – that speed and fairness naturally reinforce one another. Yet, justice systems across the world suggest otherwise. When urgency is institutionalised without explicit safeguards, decisiveness begins to substitute for deliberation. Quick timelines and central monitoring without clear procedural standards create fear. Institutions worry about regulatory penalties as well as reputational damage from complaints processed rapidly and unfairly. The new regulation assumes that the time taken in due diligence and completing procedural formalities is akin to institutional inertia. It seeks to ensure rapid enforcement by threatening higher educational institutions with dire consequences. They could be de-recognised and lose the power to award degrees. However, whether this shift commands legitimacy, will depend not on intent alone, but on the architecture of enforcement.

**Vague process**

The experience of U.S. universities during the 2010s is instructive. Faced with the pressure to act swiftly on campus misconduct, institutions prioritised speed, only to encounter sustained judicial pushback over vague evidentiary standards, unclear rights of response, and reputational harm inflicted before findings were even established. The backlash did not arise because protection was unnecessary, but because the process was thin.

Clearly, justice that moves quickly but unclearly destroys trust. That risk is magnified by how the UGC regulations distribute authority. They do not specify offences or penalties. Investigation is delegated to internal equity committees, and punishment is imposed through existing institutional services or disciplinary rules. Faced with the threat of de-recognition or funding withdrawal, universities are encouraged to prioritise visible action over careful adjudication, which produces fear. And fear, in regulatory environments, rarely fosters justice.

**Rewarding privilege**

At this point, legal design collides with social reality. The ability to document harm, articulate it in institutional language, and navigate committees remains unevenly distributed. Students from rural areas, and linguistic minorities often struggle to translate everyday discrimination into administratively legible complaints. Meanwhile, those with greater cultural and institutional exposure, sometimes from dominant sub-castes within protected categories, are better positioned to mobilise the system. The result is a quiet paradox. A regime designed to amplify marginal voices ends up privileging the most institutionally fluent among them. These pressures inevitably spill into classrooms. When academic judgment is subjected to regulatory scrutiny without procedural clarity, risk aversion becomes the most logical course. Faculty respond by diluting feedback, avoiding difficult conversations, and sanitising evaluation. And over time, institutions learn ways to bypass the complexities. Committees multiply, documentation thickens, and compliance becomes performative. Scholars describe this as compliance theatre, a phenomenon where organisations learn to demonstrate reform without addressing underlying hierarchies.

Justice in universities must not be a race to the first response. It should be a long and difficult conversation. One that demands urgency, yes, but also precision, patience, and the humility to revise. Without that balance, equity will quietly and persistently slip out of the room.

Students from rural areas and linguistic minorities often struggle to translate everyday discrimination into administratively legible complaints

# How one seat will test the MVA's unity

## MVA's fragile alliance lies in the balance in the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections

STATE OF PLAY

**Vinaya Deshpande Pandit**
vinaya.deshpande@thehindu.co.in




On February 26, the Election Commission (EC) issued a notification for the election to 37 Rajya Sabha seats in 10 States. Of them, seven seats are from Maharashtra. Among those who will complete their tenures on April 2 this year are leaders like Nationalist Congress Party-SP (NCP-SP) president Sharad Pawar and Union Minister Ramdas Athawale. As political parties across alliances in Maharashtra try to gain the most at the negotiating table, the election to one Rajya Sabha seat is likely to test the fragile unity of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), a regional alliance of the INDIA bloc.

The major questions this election will raise for the MVA are whether the Congress will be willing to compromise at a time when both the Rajya Sabha elections and Legislative Council elections are to take place in Maharashtra; whether Uddhav Thackeray will forsake his party's claim to the sole Rajya Sabha seat when his is the biggest party in the State's Opposition; and what Sharad Pawar will decide.

Negotiations are ongoing within the Mahayuti as well. While the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) wants four seats, the NCP has declared Parth Pawar's (Ajit Pawar's son) name. Eknath Shinde is keen to get two seats.

**The MVA tussle**

The battle within the MVA throws light on the aspirations of each of the three parties. It is defined by an undeniable shadow of distrust towards the NCP-SP, after talks of a merger with Ajit Pawar's NCP were revealed. In Maharashtra, the NCP (earlier led by Ajit Pawar and now by his wife Sunetra Pawar) is in power with the BJP as part of the Mahayuti alliance. The NCP-SP (led by Sharad Pawar), on the other hand, is a part of the Opposition MVA, with Congress and Shiv Sena Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray (UBT).

While some leaders said that the death of Ajit Pawar had effectively halted the possibility of a merger, others questioned whether the Rajya Sabha seat will remain with the INDIA bloc in the future, if the NCP-SP decides to go ahead with the merger. "Even if Sharad Pawar himself may choose to stay with the MVA, what if his party goes ahead with the merger?" asked a leader. Some even raised concerns about Sharad Pawar's health. He is currently recovering at a hospital in Mumbai. The NCP-SP counts on the heft of a national leader like Sharad Pawar to propose that his candidature alone can lead to an unopposed Rajya Sabha victory in the State.

Meanwhile, the Shiv Sena UBT is keen to take this Rajya Sabha seat for itself. It believes that since it is the largest party in the alliance, and had left its stake in 2019 to support Fauzia Khan (NCP-SP), it should be supported for this bid. While five leaders are in the fray, the preference seems to be for Priyanka Chaturvedi, whose term expires next month. "We have been a loyal partner in the INDIA bloc. We have taken up several national issues including the Adani-sation of Mumbai. Our presence in Rajya Sabha is crucial," a Sena leader said. The Congress, on the other hand, feels the need to increase its presence in the Rajya Sabha to play an effective role as the national Opposition party. "For us, each seat in the Parliament matters to strengthen Mallikarjun Kharge ji," a Congress leader said. The BJP has refrained from issuing any statement on the differences within the MVA so far. But the possibility of more candidates being in the fray will only nix the chances of unopposed elections, and will lead to complex number crunching in an open ballot election.

**A game of numbers**

The number game in Maharashtra is quite clear. Rajya Sabha members are voted in by the MLAs of the State. In a House of 288, the actual strength today is 286. The election quota for the Rajya Sabha election in Maharashtra is 36. In the ruling Mahayuti, the BJP has 131 MLAs, Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde) has 57 MLAs, and NCP has 40. Along with smaller allies, the Mahayuti strength is 234. Effectively, it can easily elect six of the seven Rajya Sabha members. It will have a handful of excess votes too. On the Opposition side, the MVA can also elect one candidate on the basis of its cumulative strength if it sticks together. The Shiv Sena UBT has 20 MLAs, the Congress has 16 and the NCP-SP has 10. Along with the smaller allies, its total strength is 52. The final decision will now hinge on talks between the top three leaders of the MVA. The Opposition will be able to keep uncertainty at bay only if it can achieve consensus.

# U.P. receives over 84% of all out-of-State MPLADS funds

## Only 21 MPs, two of them from the Lok Sabha, accounted for all of the out-of-usual-area spending

DATA POINT

**Nitika Francis**
**Vignesh Radhakrishnan**

**In the works:** Reconstruction of a road begins near NH-709B, Sisana village, in Baghpat, Uttar Pradesh on February 4. ANI

Twenty-one MPs recommended works outside the State or constituency they were elected from or are associated with, using their Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) funds, an analysis by *The Hindu* has found. And of the more than ₹18 crore spent on works which were completed based on these recommendations, the vast majority – 84% – went to districts in Uttar Pradesh.

Of the 530 MPs for whom "completed works" data is available, these 21 MPs account for all of the out-of-usual-area spending. All other MPs used their allocated funds in the districts or States they represent or are associated with.

The analysis by *The Hindu* covered around 21,000 works completed between 2023 and 2026. The data were sourced from the Empowered Indian MPLADS dashboard and cross-verified with the mplads.gov.in website. It was collected on February 23, 2026.

An elected Lok Sabha MP can generally recommend works in the district(s) their constituency encompasses. An elected Rajya Sabha MP can recommend works only within the State they are elected from, while nominated MPs can recommend works anywhere in the country. There are also limited exceptions: MPs can recommend up to ₹50 lakh in a financial year outside their usual region (raised from ₹25 lakh after April 2023) and can also contribute up to ₹1 crore per annum for rehabilitation and reconstruction in areas affected by natural "calamities of severe nature", as declared by the Government of India, subject to additional scrutiny.

**Exhaustive list**

Of the 21 MPs, only two are from the Lok Sabha. Mala Rajya Laxmi Shah of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Lok Sabha MP from Uttarakhand's Tehri Garhwal, spent ₹49,96,274 on footpaths and pedestrian ways built in two villages of Agra district. This amount is about 57% of her total spending of ₹87.4 lakh on all completed works. In other words, more than half of her spending on completed works went to Uttar Pradesh, with the rest spent in the Dehradun district, where parts of the Tehri Garhwal Lok Sabha constituency lie. When *The Hindu* reached out to her, she declined to comment.

Another Lok Sabha MP, Kirti Vardhan Singh from Uttar Pradesh, spent ₹10 lakh on a protective structure in Nagaland. Sadanand Mhalu Shet Tanavade, the sitting Rajya Sabha MP of the BJP from Goa, spent ₹48.6 lakh on street light poles installed in 20 locations across the Shahjahanpur district of Uttar Pradesh. The amount is about 27% of his total spending on all completed works.

Chunnilal Garasiya, the sitting Rajya Sabha MP of the BJP from Rajasthan, spent ₹98 lakh on LED lights installed in two districts of Uttar Pradesh, about 80% of his total spending on all completed works. He said he did not remember the specific areas for which he had recommended the works from the MPLADS funds. "I don't exactly remember the sectors or areas for which I have made recommendations. These things are handled by my private secretary. I have not even completed two years in office," Mr. Garasiya told *The Hindu* over phone. Mr. Garasiya was elected to the Rajya Sabha from Rajasthan in April 2024.

Sitting Rajya Sabha MP of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha from Jharkhand, Sarfraz Ahmad, spent ₹92.03 lakh on installing LED lights and building roads in the Agra and Pilibhit districts. This is one of the very few instances of such "out-of-State" funding wherein the involved MP is from a regional party and has contributed such a substantial amount to a State where said party has no footing. "I have followed the rules of the Rajya Sabha and as a member I am entitled to recommend a certain percentage of the MPLADS funds to other States as well. I have recommended the funds to Jharkhand also, " Mr. Ahmad told *The Hindu* over phone. Asked about any other specific reason to recommend funds out of his usual area, Mr. Ahmed said, "The way I have my people in Jharkhand, in the similar way I have my people in Uttar Pradesh as well."

Other sitting Rajya Sabha MPs who sent money to works in Uttar Pradesh include BJP's Rajendra Gehlot and Congress's Pramod Tiwari, both from Rajasthan; BJP's Satish Chandra Dubey from Bihar; and Congress' K.T.S. Tulsi and Phulo Devi Netam from Chhattisgarh. Together, they sent around ₹75 lakh to various projects in Uttar Pradesh. Of the ₹18 crore out-of-usual-area funds, about 6% went to Bihar, and sitting BJP Rajya Sabha MP Dhananjay Bhimrao Mahadik from Maharashtra accounts for most of it. He spent close to ₹1 crore on works in Bihar, spread across two financial years.

**The established norm**

While nominated Rajya Sabha MPs are allowed to use their MPLADS funds anywhere in the country, few actually do so beyond the State they're associated with. Most concentrate spending in the States where they built their careers – the very achievements that led to their nomination.

For instance, ace track and field athlete P.T. Usha, who was nominated to the Rajya Sabha, has spent all of her MPLADS funds thus far on roads and playgrounds and to purchase school buses across Kerala. Similarly, Dharmasthala's Veerendra Heggade spent all his funds till now in Karnataka.

**The lion's share**

Gulam Ali Khatana is a notable exception. He was born and educated in Jammu & Kashmir and has his permanent residence in the Union Territory. He is identified as a BJP member in his Rajya Sabha profile and has served as a spokesperson of the party's J&K unit. At the time of appointment, he was the lone member representing the State in the Upper House. Of the 20 questions he has raised in the Rajya Sabha, 16 relate specifically to matters in J&K, including questions on welfare funds for tribal communities and their forest rights. Mr. Khatana is a member of the Scheduled Tribe (Gurjar/Gujjar) community, according to his Rajya Sabha profile. Yet he spent nearly ₹12 crore of his MPLADS funds to install LED lights in various districts of Uttar Pradesh, accounting for over 95% of his total MPLADS expense. Of the 21 MPs analysed for mismatched funds, Mr. Khatana accounts for the largest share. Uttar Pradesh already receives a large share of MPLADS funds because it sends the most MPs to Parliament. Of the 20,858 works completed between 2023 and 2026, 26% were in Uttar Pradesh. Around a fifth of the utilised funds also went to the State. Uttar Pradesh utilises more than twice as much MPLADS funds as the second-ranked Tamil Nadu, with the latter accounting for around 9%.

Against this background, the mismatch is more pronounced: over 84% of the out-of-usual-area funds were directed to Uttar Pradesh. In several instances, the funds came from MPs elected from or associated with States with lower per capita incomes and a smaller share of MPLADS funds. J&K, with which Mr. Khatana is so strongly associated, received only 0.6% of the MPLADS utilised funds and accounted for only about 1% of completed works.

*With inputs from Mohammed Iqbal, Ishita Mishra, Amit Bhelari, who are reporters at The Hindu, and Suman Raj L., Shriram N., and Nivedha M. who interned with the Data Team.*

FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 2, 1976

## Arafat suggests UN buffer zone in Israeli-held area

Washington, Feb. 29: Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) leader Mr. Yasser Arafat has proposed the creation of United Nations buffer zone in Israeli occupied Arab territory as a step to a West Asian peace conference and recognition of Israel's right to exist. The *Washington Post* newspaper reported today.

It said he put the proposal to Democratic Senator, Mr. Adlai Stevenson during the Senator's recent tour of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran and Israel.

According the proposal, the U.N. would take over the occupied areas except for parts of the Gaza strip and the west bank of Jordan adjoining Israel. These adjoining parts will be administered jointly by Israel and the U.N. the newspaper said.

The newspaper said Mr. Arafat indicated to Senator Stevenson that if Israel made that first move it could break the deadlock that has held up resumption of West Asian peace talks in Geneva.

The *Post* said that according to Senator Stevenson, who met the PLO leader in Beirut and took his proposal to the Israeli and U.S. Governments, the Israelis showed little interest in the suggestion. – Reuter

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 2, 1926

## Fastest car in the world

The London correspondent of "The Englishman" cables under date Feb. 6 –

What is expected to prove the world's fastest motor car was to-day surrounded by a dozen experts and detectives in a closely guarded shed in the Sunbeam works at Wolverhampton.

I was among the few privileged persons who inspected the car, which has been shrouded in secrecy during the last eighteen months. Major Segrave, who will drive the car on the Southport sands probably to-morrow; hopes to beat the world record of 150.269 miles an hour secured on the Pendine sands in South Wales in July last year. The car has twelve cylinders and is only 33 horse-power according to Treasury rating but it is claimed that it can develop 300 horse-power at 6,000 revolutions. France, Italy and the United States are all making hectic preparations to produce cars which will attempt to beat the mile and kilometre records now held by Britain.

From Page One

## Iran hits Israel, U.S. base after Khamenei's death

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian said in a pre-recorded message aired on state television that a new leadership council had begun its work. Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said a new Supreme Leader would be chosen in "one or two days".

Iran has named Ayatollah Alireza Arafi, a senior cleric, to its interim leadership council. The interim council, which will also include the President and the head of the judiciary, will lead the country until the Assembly of Experts "elects a permanent leader as soon as possible".

"You have crossed our red line and must pay the price," Iran's parliamentary Speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, said in a televised address on Sunday. "We will deliver such devastating blows that you yourselves will be driven to beg."

Mr. Trump warning against any retaliation said on a social media post, "They better not do that. If they do, we will hit them with a force that has never been seen before!"

He also said that the strikes had sunk nine Iranian naval vessels and partially destroyed Iran's navy headquarters.

As U.S. and Israeli strikes have pounded Iran, the Islamic Republic has retaliated with missiles and drone attacks on Israel and nearby Arab Gulf countries hosting U.S. forces.

Israel's Defence Minister Israel Katz said on Sunday that Israel will have "a non-stop air train" of strikes against military and leadership targets in Iran.

Shrapnel from Iranian attacks on Abu Dhabi killed two people, state media said, and debris from aerial interceptions caused fires at the city's main port and on the facade of theBurj Al Arab hotel. Attacks also extended into Oman – Iran's long-time interlocutor with the West that hadn't been drawn into the fray previously.

## Indian airlines suspend services to all 11 nations

Authorities in Dubai and Abu Dhabi have instructed hotels to accommodate guests unable to depart due to the disruption.

In Dubai, the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism issued a formal directive to hotel managers, asking them to allow affected guests to extend their stay on the same terms as in their original bookings.

In Abu Dhabi, authorities issued a parallel order that goes a step further, confirming that the government would bear the accommodation costs for stranded guests, according to local media reports.

The Embassy of India in Muscat, Oman issued a public notice informing that Indian citizens in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE), who hold valid resident cards, were eligible for a visa on arrival, enabling them to enter Oman and seek temporary shelter.

The advisory added that Indian passport holders with a valid visa or residence permit from the U.S., the U.K., Canada, Japan and Schengen countries are also eligible for a visa on arrival, allowing entry into Oman for up to 10 days without a prearranged visa.

Other travellers may apply for an e-visa through an authorised travel agency.

## At least 18 killed in Nagpur factory blast

Citing Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a post on X, the PMO said: "The explosion at a factory in Nagpur is deeply distressing. My condolences to the families of the deceased. I pray for the speedy recovery of the injured. The local administration is assisting those affected. An *ex gratia* of ₹2 lakh from PMNRF would be given to the next of kin of each deceased. The injured would be given ₹50,000."

The Maharashta government has also announced financial assistance of ₹5 lakh to the kin of those who died in the explosion. "Apart from this, the concerned company will also provide financial assistance to their families," said Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, adding that a thorough investigation of the incident has been ordered.

**Relief and rescue**

He said that teams from the National and State Disaster Response Forces (NDRF, SDRF), the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO), and the Directorate of Industrial Safety and Health (DISH) had reached the spot.

Revenue Minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule also vowed that strict action would be taken against the culprits, terming the incident extremely heartbreaking and unfortunate.

**'Safety audits needed'**

SBL Energy extended its condolences while noting that the exact cause of the explosion remains under investigation. "We are deeply saddened by the tragic incident at our facility in Katol, Nagpur district, and extend our heartfelt condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives," SBL Energy said in a statement.

Calling the blast "tragic", Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar) leader Anil Deshmukh alleged that negligence in the safety audits of firms manufacturing explosives has resulted in the increase of such blasts.

# Will leverage tech to crack down on market manipulators, says SEBI chief

SEBI Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey says market regulator is using AI to educate investors; he urges people to use tools such as SEBI Check to deter fraudsters, and warns against financial influencers promising astronomical returns; he says SEBI will make sure there is no instability in the markets

**Lalatendu Mishra**
**Ashokamithran T.**
MUMBAI

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) will enhance surveillance and enforcement on market manipulators and cyberfraudsters through technology and use artificial intelligence (AI) to widen the reach of its investor awareness programmes, its Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey told *The Hindu* in an interview.

He said the SEBI aims to have "optimum regulation" in the capital market without "irritating" the stakeholders – exchanges, investors, brokers – such that "the market functions with integrity".

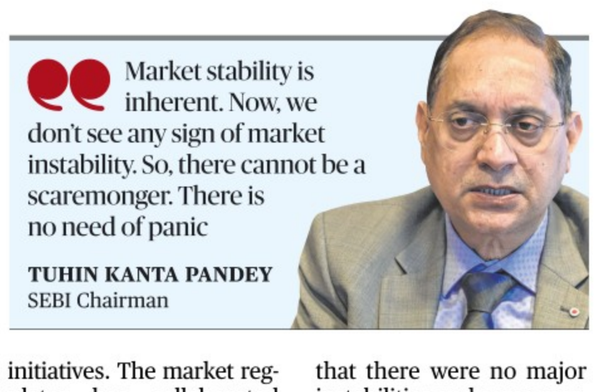
The SEBI chief said that ever since he assumed charge last year, the regulator has rolled out 58 initiatives to ease business processes in the capital market, nine broad initiatives to make the market investor-centric and educate investors to make better choices. The SEBI has made four changes to strengthen the framework regulating market intermediaries such as exchanges. It has introduced 13 measures to develop the capital market and six regulations to cool down speculation and stabilise the equity derivatives segment, he said.

**Tech-driven initiatives**

A lot of the SEBI's initiatives were technology-driven, said Mr. Pandey, highlighting the development of SEBI Check, a tool within the UPI interface that identifies registered intermediaries for investors before they make a payment. The tool is expected to rein in fraudulent brokers or traders who promise unreal gains and dupe investors.

He urged investors to be safe and be proactive while using these tools to identify cyberfrauds. "If someone is approaching, people should say that 'you are a fraud as your account does not show SEBI Check. I will lodge an FIR against you'," he said, adding that people need to visit their broker's office or bank branches at least once before making an investment.

He said the SEBI was planning to run campaigns to popularise these tools as part of investor education initiatives. The market regulator has collaborated with Bengaluru-based AI company SARVAM to widen the reach of such efforts. "We have also done a pilot AI campaign with SARVAM where they have reached out to about 3,85,000 people through calls, and these calls were made through an AI process in multiple languages to explain about the SEBI Check tool," he said.




**'Disciplined investing'**

Mr. Pandey inherited a correcting stock market in which retail investors may not be able to make returns they saw during the post-COVID rally. With the markets falling amid sustained selling by foreign investors and geopolitical uncertainly, he said the SEBI's role was to make sure that there were no major instabilities and some market participants "do not act too smart".

The SEBI chief said returns were contingent on multiple factors, and gains should not be judged based on one period alone. "People have always compounded their wealth over a period of time (through) disciplined and long investing," he said, adding that the Indian markets were stable and the economy was growing.

Speaking on the widespread speculation in options trading (a derivative instrument which is used to protect investors from crashing stocks leading to losses), he said that this was limited to short duration options. With some stakeholders proposing many ideas, including restricting "unsuitable" players from the market to ensure stability, Mr. Pandey said there were no signs of instability in the markets. "Market stability is inherent. Now we don't see any sign of market instability. So, there cannot be scaremongering. There is no need of panic," he said.

Mr. Pandey warned investors against financial influencers who were "conning" investors by promising returns on options. He said people must be careful of such "swindlers" who operate through WhatsApp groups, adding that the SEBI was monitoring such activities.

**Action is accurate**

Last year, the SEBI took action against many market manipulators and mis-sellers. Avadhut Sathe, for example, who ran an "unregistered investment advisory" in the name of an academy, and Jane Street, an American hedge fund which allegedly manipulated a significant portion of the options market, were the prominent ones. They were served interim orders and investigations on both the cases are under way. Both have approached the Securities Appellate Tribunals.

While Mr. Pandey refused to comment on individual cases that were *sub-judice*, he expressed confidence that in recent days, the SEBI had 80% to 90% success rate in the tribunal cases and much higher rate in the Supreme Court, and that principles of natural justice should apply.

Mr. Pandey said the SEBI was studying the possibilities of rejuvenating the agri-commodities market.

"Two working groups were created in agriculture to look at all kinds of problems, which were faced by the commodity side of agriculture. And they have given reports to me (last week), and it will go to committee process," he said. The SEBI is also set to focus on deepening the corporate bonds market, he said.

Mr. Pandey said the SEBI would study the impact of regulations and make policy-writing more scientific. A committee under Chief Economic Adviser V. Anantha Nageswaran would discuss this, he said.

# Countdown to BJP's exit has begun, says AAP chief

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal, centre, with party MP Sanjay Singh, right, and party leader Manish Sisodia, during a rally, on Sunday. PTI

Alleging that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was "corrupt", Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, in his first public rally after being discharged in the Delhi excise policy case, on Sunday said the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) downfall had begun.

"Friends, this is that Jantar Mantar from where people decided to get rid of the Congress. Today, this day of Jantar Mantar is a historic day. Note today's date. From today, the countdown to the BJP's [downfall] has begun," Mr. Kejriwal said, addressing party workers at Jantar Mantar here.

"Modi*ji* won't take action [against corruption] because either Modi*ji* is personally involved in corruption or his party members or his friends are involved in the scams. I am not corrupt, Modi*ji* is the one doing corruption," he said.

On Friday, a special court discharged Mr. Kejriwal, former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, and 21 others in the politically charged liquor policy case.

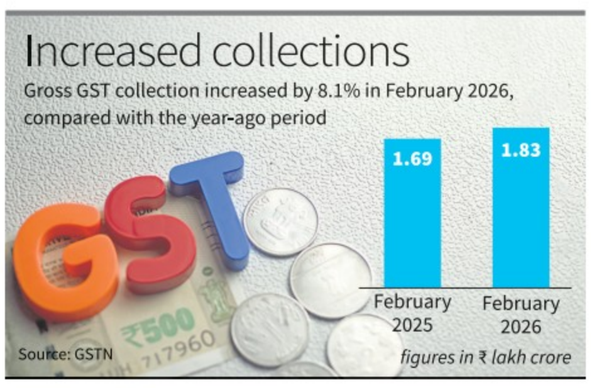
Mr. Kejriwal also said he would quit politics if even one contractor said that he had asked for money. "Today, I challenge you. I was Chief Minister for 10 years and signed many files. Even if one contractor or one vendor of Delhi government stands up and says that 'Kejriwal asked me for money', I will leave politics," he said.

Hitting back, the BJP alleged that Mr. Kejriwal's 11-year tenure had been associated with "zero development, corruption, scams", whereas one year of the BJP government in Delhi had been marked by change and development.

The Congress party, meanwhile, alleged that the denial of permission to the Youth Congress to hold a programme at Jantar Mantar, even as the AAP was given permission, showed that both the AAP and BJP were complicit.

# GST collection increases by 8.1% to over ₹1.83 lakh crore

**Press Trust of India**
NEW DELHI




Gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection increased by 8.1% to over ₹1.83 lakh crore in February, led by higher growth in revenues from imports and improved domestic sales.

Gross domestic revenue rose 5.3% to about ₹1.36 lakh crore, while gross import revenue climbed 17.2% to ₹47,837 crore. Total refunds were up 10.2% at ₹22,595 crore.

Total net GST collection stood at over ₹1.61 lakh crore, up 7.9% year-on-year.

Net cess revenue was ₹5,063 crore, down from ₹13,481 crore in February last year.

The GST rates on about 375 items were slashed, effective from September 2025. Also, four tax slabs of 5%, 12%, 18% and 28% were merged into two of 5% and 18%, with a highest 40% slab for a select few ultra luxury goods and tobacco products. The GST collections had initially dipped in the first month of tax cut implementation, with revenues declining to ₹1.7 lakh crore in November.

The collection rose to ₹1.74 lakh crore in December and further to ₹1.93 lakh crore in January.

**'Consumption uptick'**

Deloitte India Partner M.S. Mani said GST collection figures reflected the fact that there had been a consumption uptick that had more than compensated for the rate reductions. However, the negative growth reported by major States such as Tamil Nadu (-6%), Madhya Pradesh (-8%), and Rajasthan (-1%) , and the single digit growth below the national average of 8% reported by West Bengal (1%), Haryana (2%), Uttar Pradesh (5%), and Maharashtra (6%) would be a matter of concern, Mr. Mani said.

EY India tax partner Saurabh Agarwal said this performance reaffirmmed the strength of India's consumption engine.

# Most SIR adjudication cases in Bengal are from Muslim-dominated districts

**Shiv Sahay Singh**
KOLKATA

Booth-level officers hang voters' list after the publication of the post-SIR electoral rolls, in Birbhum, West Bengal on Sunday. PTI

Most West Bengal voters awaiting adjudication during the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls are from minority-dominated districts, according to data shared by the State's Chief Electoral Officer.

There are 60,06,675 cases under adjudication in the final roll published on February 28.

Muslim-dominated districts have the highest number of such voters, including 11 lakh in Murshidabad and eight lakh in Malda.

In fact, these two districts bordering Bangladesh have almost one-third of cases under adjudication. There are 4.8 lakh cases under adjudication in Uttar Dinajpur, 5.9 lakh in North 24 Parganas, and 5.2 lakh in South 24 Parganas. These districts also have a high percentage of minority population.

There are 501 judicial officers working to clear the names of 60 lakh electors, and supplementary lists will be published, in accordance with the Supreme Court's order of February 20.

West Bengal's final electoral roll, published on February 28, has 7.04 crore electors, 8.09% lower than when the process started on October 27, 2025.

**'Fixed target'**

The Trinamool Congress leadership plans to continue its protests against the SIR. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will sit on a dharna against the Election Commission (EC), on March 6 in Kolkata.

At a press conference on Sunday, Trinamool Congress MP and general secretary Abhishek Banerjee alleged that the "target of deleting over one crore voters was decided even before the exercise began".

"...They had fixed a target. The Election Commission is acting accordingly," Mr. Banerjee alleged.

# BJP kicks off election campaign from four corners of Bengal

**Shiv Sahay Singh**
KOLKATA

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leadership on Sunday began its campaign for West Bengal Assembly election with four *parivartan yatras* (march for change) starting from four corners of the State.

The *yatras* were flagged off from Cooch Behar in north Bengal, Krishnanagar in Nadia, Garbeta in Paschim Medinipur, and Kulti in Asansol.

In Cooch Behar, BJP president Nitin Nabin said the *yatras* would cover about 5,000 km with a promise of "new Bengal".

At these events, party leaders, including Union Ministers, targeted the ruling Trinamool Congress over "neglect" of north Bengal, "decline" of industries, and incidents of rape and murder, among others.

**PM's rally**

On March 2, five more *yatras* will be flagged off in the State. All nine *yatras* will conclude with a public rally of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Kolkata's Brigade Parade Grounds. Union Home Minister Amit Shah is likely to join the *parivartan yatra* on Monday and is likely to address a public meeting at Raidighi in South 24 Parganas.

## CBSE defers exams in West Asia region amid tensions

**Press Trust of India**
NEW DELHI

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Sunday postponed the Class 10 and 12 Board exams scheduled for March 2 in the West Asia region amid the Iran-Israel conflict, officials said.

"Due to current situation in parts of Middle East – Bahrain, Iran, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE, the board has decided to postpone class 10, 12 exams on March 2," said CBSE Examination Controller Sanyam Bhardwaj.

"The new dates will be announced later," Mr. Bhardwaj added.

"The Board will review the situation on March 3 and take appropriate decisions with regard to examination scheduled from March 5 onwards," the CBSE Examination Controller further said.

# Indians among injured in Iranian strikes: UAE

Conflict between U.S.-Israel alliance and Iran sends shock waves across West Asia; oil tanker with Indians among crew hit off Oman coast; eight Indians stuck in Karachi airport after aircraft diversion over the conflict; MEA urges foreign nationals who could not leave India to contact their nearest FRRO for visa extension and stay regularisation

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

Several Indians were among those who have been injured in the missile and drone attacks by Iran in West Asia, authorities in the UAE and Oman said on Sunday. The announcement came as the conflict between U.S.-Israel alliance and the Islamic Republic entered its second day even as Indian missions heightened activities to address concerns of citizens scattered across West Asia.

Three were killed in drone attacks and 58, including Indians, were injured in the UAE, the Defence Ministry of the Gulf country said. Iran launched 541 drones at Abu Dhabi and Dubai and nearly 506 of these were destroyed by the UAE forces, the Ministry said. "Three deaths of Pakistani, Nepalese, and Bangladeshi nationalities, and 58 cases of minor injuries of Emirati, Egyptian, Ethiopian, Filipino, Pakistani, Iranian, Indian, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, Azerbaijani, Yemeni, Ugandan, Eritrean, Lebanese, and Afghan nationalities." A total of 165 ballistic missiles launched by Iran were detected since the beginning of the conflict and 152 of them were destroyed, it said.

An oil tanker with 20 crew members, 15 among them Indians, was targeted off the Oman coast, the Maritime Security Centre of Oman said. The tanker *Skylight*, under the flag of the Republic of Palau, was struck five nautical miles north of the Khasab port in the Musandam Governorate and the crew were evacuated, it said, adding that "preliminary information also indicates varying injuries among four members of the ship's crew who have been transferred to receive necessary medical treatment".

**Embassy outreach:** Indian embassy officials interact with nationals stranded in Kuwait amid temporary airspace shutdown. PTI

**Stranded passengers**

The ripple effect of the conflict is being felt across India with flight cancellations and uncertainties leaving people stranded at multiple locations.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Sunday issued an order urging all foreign nationals who failed to leave India because of the conflict to reach out to their nearest Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) for extension of visa and regularisation of stay.

A total of 84 students and 4 faculty members of Indira University's School of Business, Pune, were stuck in Dubai after temporary closure of UAE airspace. The team had travelled to Dubai for an international academic and cultural immersion programme, and the institution has urged the MEA to safely bring them back, *The Hindu* was told. "The authority has assured that once airspace operations resume, arrangements will be made for their safe return to India at the earliest," said ISBS Dean Janardhan Pawar. All of them are safe, said the institute.

Among the passengers stranded at the Dubai Airport was two-time Olympic medallist P.V. Sindhu, who said there was an explosion near the airport on Sunday morning. "A few hours ago, there was an explosion close to where we were holed up at the airport. My coach had to quickly run out of the area as he was closest to the smoke and debris. It was an extremely tense and scary moment for all of us. We are all safe now and have been moved to a more secure place," she said in a post on X on Sunday.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's office (CMO) confirmed that three Keralites of a family were among eight Indians stranded in Karachi as their aircraft was diverted to Pakistan due to the conflict. The CMO identified them as Krishnadas Nagallur (Palakkad), his wife, Dr. Rashmi Menon (Ernakulam), and their daughter, Smriti Menon (aged three). The family was on an Air Arabia flight from Azerbaijan to Kuwait via Sharjah when air controllers diverted the plane to Karachi.

**Flight services hit**

While arrivals from West Asian countries continued through the morning in Hyderabad, many passengers described a growing sense of unease during their journeys. Abrar, a resident of Shaikpet, said he had travelled from Medina in Saudi Arabia to Jeddah before boarding a direct flight to Hyderabad on Saturday. "There was not much tension when we boarded the flight on Saturday. Mid-flight, an announcement was made saying that some tensions were ongoing and that those with connecting flights could check with their airline after landing in Hyderabad," he said.

According to information provided by airport authorities, 48 flights to and from Hyderabad were cancelled on Sunday. IndiGo accounted for the highest number of cancellations, with 33 flights affected. Other airlines impacted included Emirates, Qatar Airways, Etihad Airways, Air Arabia, Kuwait Airways, Gulf Air, and Oman Air.

## Protests in Kashmir over Khamenei killing, schools closed for two days

**Peerzada Ashiq**
SRINAGAR

Spontaneous and widespread street protests erupted across Kashmir, including the capital Srinagar and in Ladakh on Sunday over the killing of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei in an Israel-U.S. attack.

Security was stepped up across the valley in response to the demonstrations. J&K Director-General of Police (DGP) Nalin Prabhat patrolled the streets of Srinagar to monitor the situation, while authorities warned residents against "misusing social media". Fearing more protests, the J&K government ordered the closure of all educational institutions in Kashmir for the next two days.

People gather outside the UNMOGIP office in Srinagar during a protest, chanting slogans critical of the U.S. and Israel. IMRAN NISSAR

**CM's message**

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah appealed to the people to "uphold peace", and urged the police "to exercise utmost restraint and refrain from using force or restrictive measures".

"We must also ensure that those who are mourning in J&K are allowed to grieve peacefully," Mr. Abdullah said.

The appeal came hours after hundreds of Muslims, mostly from the Shia sect, poured onto the streets in Srinagar, Budgam, Baramulla and Bandipora districts. Significant protests were also reported in Kargil and Leh districts of Ladakh.

The largest rally took place at Ghanta Ghar (Clock Tower) in Srinagar where demonstrators offered congregational prayers and marched to the office of the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) to register their protest. Beating their chests and mourning, protesters draped the clock tower with images of the slain leader and raised anti-U.S. and anti-Israel slogans.

"The death of a martyr infuses life into the nation's cause," said a protester.

Waheed Ur Rehman Parra of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) joined the protests at Lal Chowk. Top Shia clerics in Kashmir, including Aga Syed Ruhullah, Imran Ansari, Masroor Abbas and Aga Syed Muntazir Mehdi, expressed sorrow over the killing.

"There will be 40 days of official mourning across the region. Black flags will be hoisted at all mosques, imambargahs, and religious institutions across the Valley," said Shia cleric Aga Syed Hassan Al-Moosavi Al-Safavi, president of Anjuman-e-Sharie Shian.

The Muttahida Majlis-e-Ulama, an amalgam of Islamic organisations headed by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, called for a shutdown on Monday. "I am deeply saddened and outraged at the brutal killing. It has shaken the Muslim world. This is a moment for the Muslim Ummah to rise above divisions, stand united, and register our protest and solidarity against this killing and the continued aggression in the region," the Mirwaiz said.

Former J&K Chief Minister and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti described the killing as "a deeply tragic and shameful point in history". She criticised Israel and the U.S. for celebrating the act and condemned Muslim countries that "chose convenience over conscience." "Israel and the U.S. are boasting about the killing. What's more disgraceful and shocking is the explicit and implicit support given by Muslim countries who chose convenience and expedience over conscience," Mr. Mufti said.

"History will stand as testament to who fought for justice and who helped the oppressors. Prayers with the people of Iran. May Allah grant them strength & victory over forces of tyranny and injustice," she said.

## Centre flags risk of violence after U.S.-Israel strikes on Iran

**Vijaita Singh**
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry has cautioned States against "possible violence" and "sporadic protests" in India in the wake of a joint military operations by the U.S. and Israel against Iran, a senior government official told *The Hindu*.

Thousands of people took to the streets across the country in protest against the killing of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Demonstrations were held in Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Karnataka, and Delhi, among others, by Shia groups.

People hold portraits of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei during a protest in Hyderabad on Sunday. PTI

In a communication sent to the Chief Secretaries and Directors-General of Police on Saturday, the Ministry asked the States to keep a watch on protests and demonstrations by "affiliates of both pro- and anti-Iranian regime" at the embassies and consulate offices of Iran, the U.S., and Israel, the official said.

It also asked the States to identify "pro-Iran radical preachers giving inflammatory sermons and provoking violent actions".

The States have been asked to monitor the social media activities of "pro-Iran extremists and the global terrorist groups (GTG) handles", and enhance the watch on "pro-Iran student organisations and socio-political organisations".

**Likely targets**

According to the Ministry, the likely targets of the Shia militia groups, as well as the global terror groups such as the Islamic State and Al Qaeda, may include the U.S. and Israeli embassies and consulates in India and their staff, delegations, business persons, resorts, business establishments, tourist sites frequented by westerners, synagogues, Chhabad Houses, kosher shops, and Jewish community centres.

The Ministry asked the States to sensitise security personnel regarding the threat perception, and the need to augment security arrangements, particularly in and around the embassies and consulates, and also tourist locations frequented by Israeli, American, and Iranian visitors.

It suggested CCTV coverage and checking of locations for the presence of improvised explosives devices and explosive substances.

"It is also requested to take measures, including security arrangements at the sites mentioned above and other vulnerable locations to prevent any untoward incident and to maintain law and order, peace, and public tranquility. A watch may also be kept on social media to curb the spread of misinformation and requisite action may be taken in this regard," the Ministry said.

## Parties say killing of Khamenei is unlawful

**Press Trust of India**
NEW DELHI

The killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in joint U.S.-Israel strikes was condemned by several Opposition parties on Sunday.

AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi termed the killing an "immoral and unlawful act", and expressed the hope that the Centre would play a role in stopping the war.

CPI leader D. Raja said that the U.S.-Israel "nexus represents evil in its most naked form". "To now assassinate a sitting head of state is to strip the so-called rules-based order of its last pretence. Sovereignty clearly applies only to those aligned with Washington," Mr. Raja said on X.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut slammed the Centre for its stand following the U.S.-Israeli attack on India's "friend" Iran. He said that Iran becoming weak is also dangerous for India because if the U.S. and Israel control the West Asian country, their steps will move towards India.

RJD MP Manoj Jha said: "The U.S.-Israel-Iran war is very shameful, and it is not going to stop; the UN has lost its meaning."

## 'Attack on Iran signals revival of coercive unilateralism'

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday condemned the "targeted assassination" of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, without a formal declaration of war by the U.S. and Israel.

"The targeted use of force to destabilise the leadership and governing structures of a sovereign state – whether in Iran or earlier in Venezuela – signals a disturbing revival of regime-change doctrines and coercive unilateralism," Mr. Kharge said.

"A targeted killing of a sitting head of state strikes at the heart of these international rules," he further said.

## Centre's response to Iran war is betrayal of India's values, principles, interests: Congress

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

In a sustained attack on the foreign policy of the Union government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Congress on Sunday alleged that the Centre's response to the war inflicted on Iran amounted to a betrayal of India's "values, principles, concerns and interests".

The country, the party said, is paying a heavy price for both the "substance and style" of Mr. Modi's foreign policy.

Despite "grandstanding" by the Prime Minister's supporters, India's foreign policy under the "self-styled Vishwaguru" stood "brutally exposed", Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh said in a detailed post on the social media platform X. Mr. Ramesh cited recent remarks by U.S. President Donald Trump praising Pakistan's military chief Field Marshal Asim Munir and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif after Pakistan launched strikes on Afghanistan.

Jairam Ramesh

"The U.S. President continues his romance with Pakistan, applauding again and again the very man whose inflammatory remarks provided the backdrop to the terror attacks in Pahalgam on April 22, 2025," Mr. Ramesh said.

President Trump had claimed "a hundred times" that he had secured the cessation of Operation Sindoor by threatening increased tariffs on Indian exports.

The eventual U.S.-India trade deal, Mr. Ramesh said, had been concluded "at Mr. Modi's request", and was now seen as one-sided, with India agreeing to liberalise imports, especially in agricultural commodities, without equivalent commitments from the U.S.

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**Pre-bid Conference:** On 05.03.2026 at 11:00 AM in the Committee room, Anaaj Bhawan, Sector 39-C, Chandigarh.
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# Institutions, including the courts, must acknowledge error: Singhvi

The measure of a legal system is not how it treats the powerful when they are secure, but how it treats the vulnerable when they are exposed, says senior advocate; democracies strengthen when disagreement remains reasoned, respectful, he says

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

If institutions, including the courts, have erred, they must have the courage to acknowledge the mistake, senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi said at the "Justice Unplugged: Shaping the Future of Law" conclave on Saturday.

"The Constitution does not defend itself. It relies on disciplined minds and courageous voices... Institutions, including courts, can falter but courage must outlive error. The eventual judicial acknowledgement of that error demonstrates something equally powerful; that constitutional systems possess the capacity for self-correction... The lesson is not to romanticise fallibility, but to recognise that vigilance is generational," Mr. Singhvi said.

His observations were part of his address as chief guest of the conclave organised by the Vellore Institute of Technology School of Law in association with *The Hindu*, to an audience of mostly young law students and lawyers.

Senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi at the Justice Unplugged 2026 conclave in New Delhi on Saturday. R.V. MOORTHY

Powerful interests may have the capacity to dent ambitions but they cannot take away the soul or conscience of constitutionally protected judges and independent lawyers who stand firmly by the truth, Mr. Singhvi said.

"Ultimately, when history judges such lawyers and judges, it normally gets its verdict right. The loaves and fishes of high office and of high posts are discounted by history. It elevates only those to a pedestal who have followed the call of their soul and the voice of their conscience," Mr. Singhvi said.

The courts should apply constitutional jurisprudence to protect the cherished rights of the common man from arbitrary excesses of the state, including preventive detention, he said. The judiciary's role as protector of the Constitution is critical, especially when the government tries to expand its Executive authority after moments of national trauma, he added.

"The law is ultimately about the people. Behind every Constitutional principle stands a human story – a prisoner seeking bail, a worker seeking wages, a woman seeking equality, a citizen seeking justice," he said.

The character and strength of a legal system has to be measured by the protection it afforded the little person in dire need of access to justice, Mr. Singhvi said. "The measure of a legal system is not how it treats the powerful when they are secure, but how it treats the vulnerable when they are exposed. Law at its noblest is a shield for those without a voice," he added.

Continuous dialogue about liberty, equality, governance among judges, advocates, and scholars is a life force in every democracy, Mr. Singhvi said. "Democracies decline when debate declines. Democracies strengthen when disagreement remains reasoned, respectful, and rooted in Constitutional fidelity," he said.

Referring to the conclave's theme of artificial intelligence (AI) in the legal profession, Mr. Singhvi said AI was a remarkable tool, just like nuclear power, but which had to be used constructively and positively.

"As long as AI is the slave and we are the master, AI is of great use," he said. Legal practitioners form the protective wall against invasive technology, the senior advocate added.

A discussion on national building is not complete without economic national building, the senior advocate said, in the same way that politics is the "visible architecture of a nation, law is its invisible foundation".

Economic justice and economic growth are both mediated through law, he said.

# Use AI like a co-pilot, not as autopilot: VIT vice-president

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

Artificial intelligence must be used like a co-pilot and not as an autopilot, G.V. Selvam, vice-president of the Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT), said during a conversation with L.V. Navaneeth, CEO, The Hindu Group, at "Justice Unplugged: Shaping the Future of Law", a conclave organised by the VIT School of Law in association with *The Hindu* in Delhi on Saturday

G.V. Selvam says social media aids in developing contacts, which can be converted into clients for lawyers. R.V. MOORTHY

"AI is not a threat. It is an additional tool. It depends on the user. AI is a time-saver. It summarises, compares and makes statements. In one line, you should use AI like a co-pilot and not as an autopilot," Mr. Selvam said in response to Mr. Navaneeth's query on whether AI is a disruptive threat or a powerful enabling tool for a lawyer.

The conclave, which extensively discussed the shaping of the future of law and the role of AI, saw the participation of legal experts and was attended by students from the VIT School of Law.

Mr. Selvam said the VIT had an added advantage in legal education because of its deep-rooted academic experience and learning in the fields of engineering and technology.

"We are not teaching only the rules and regulations. We connect with cybersecurity, AI, and biotechnology. We ask students to focus on conferences and paper presentations. We have strong global connections useful for students. We project them (students) not only as lawyers. We give them technology as an added advantage. For both law and engineering, we have a flexible system allowing students to pursue study and interact with other technologies," he said.

Observing that the younger generation was fast, adaptive, and eager to "learn more in a short time", he said that the VIT tempered the expectation for quick success and made students ready for the "hard walk to success" through practical workshops, dialogues with senior lawyers and sitting judges, and visits to High Courts and trial courts as part of their curriculum.

Mr. Selvam described social media as a "double-edged sword".

"It connects the world with you. It develops contacts. These contacts can be converted into clients for a lawyer," he said.

## INBRIEF

### M.P. CM releases gharials and turtles at Kuno National Park

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Sunday released gharials and turtles into the river at the Kuno National Park in Sheopur district, calling it an important step towards conservation. Mr. Yadav released 53 gharials and 25 turtles into the Kuno River, during a programme organised under the aegis of the National Chambal Sanctuary. PTI

### 15 Maoists surrender in Chhattisgarh's Mahasamund

Fifteen Naxalites belonging to the Balangir-Bargarh-Mahasamund (BBM) division of CPI (Maoist) surrendered before security personnel in Chhattisgarh's Mahasamund district on Sunday, Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma said. Nine of the 15 surrendered cadres are women. The group also deposited a cache of weapons, Mr. Sharma said.

# 'Coalition governments gave India opportunities to reform its federal structure'

**The Hindu Bureau**
CHENNAI

A webinar on "Constitution Under the Microscope: Federalism, Free Speech and the Indian Republic", jointly organised by the SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST) and *The Hindu*, focused on strained Centre-State ties in many States, the role of Governors, and the importance of free speech.

Responding to a question on whether the Constitution requires amendments to make it more federal in nature, Madras High Court advocate Suhrith Parthasarathy said such an amendment may not be necessary. Instead, he stressed the need to preserve the Constitution's basic essence.

He suggested three ways of interpreting the Constitution with a federal tilt and not a unitary one.

"The first is by restoring fiscal federalism: giving States a greater say in GST design and revenue stability, and revisiting Centrally Sponsored Schemes. The second is rebalancing legislative power by tightening the scope of the Concurrent List and strengthening institutions such as the Inter-State Council. The third is to reform the role of Governors."

Akila R., an advocate practising at the Madras High Court and trial courts in Chennai, said in the current political scenario, amending the Constitution to make it more federal may not be feasible.

A. Vinay Kumar, the Pro Vice-Chancellor for the Faculty of Science and Humanities, School of Law, and Faculty of Management at SRMIST, Kattankulathur, observed that India had opportunities to reform its federal structure during long stints of coalition governments.

Sree Sudha, Dean of SRM School of Law, said freedom of speech and expression is an important fundamental right.

On the question of hate speeches by politicians, SRMIST School of Law associate professor Sumana Vedanth said there is currently no mechanism in place to restrict hate speeches from being made. Referring to the recent NCERT Class 8 textbook controversy, Dr. Vedanth said, "Ensuring that published content is authentic and verifiable is the way forward." The webinar can be viewed at *https://newsth.live/THSRMLY*

# Centre is working for honour, justice of Sikh community: PM

**Press Trust of India**
NAVI MUMBAI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the Union government was working with full commitment to ensure honour and justice for the Sikh community, highlighting various welfare measures and relief offered to the persecuted Sikhs through the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

Mr. Modi virtually addressed the 'Hind-Di-Chadar' commemoration event held in Kharghar here to mark the 350th martyrdom anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Addressing the gathering, Home Minister Amit Shah said religious conversions were happening in Punjab and appealed to the Bhagwant Mann government and common people to stop this practice driven by "greed".

Mr. Modi said the government formed a special investigation team (SIT) for the 1984 riots.

"Many cases related to the 1984 riots were closed. We reopened them, and the government also announced additional compensation for the riot-affected families. The National Commission for Minorities was given a more active role," he said.

"We are working in a mission mode. Our government safely brought back *saroops* (copies of Shri Guru Granth Sahib) from Afghanistan. We paved the way for offering citizenship to Sikhs and Hindus from Afghanistan. Through CAA, we offered relief to the persecuted Sikhs," Mr. Modi asserted.

Mr. Modi also said rehabilitation packages were implemented for Sikh families from Jammu and Kashmir, while OCI and visa regulations were simplified, and thousands of blacklisted names of Sikhs were removed.

# Maharashtra CM invites Canada to invest in State

**The Hindu Bureau**
MUMBAI

A strong partnership between Maharashtra and Canada is poised to shape a dynamic future driven by investment, innovation, and shared opportunity, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said on Sunday.

He was speaking at a special reception hosted in Mumbai for the Canadian delegation, including Canada's Minister of National Revenue François-Philippe Champagne, and others.

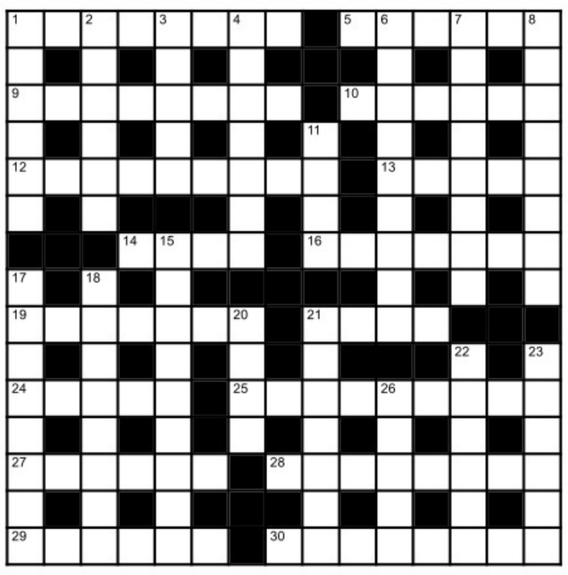
"The world today faces the dual challenge of ensuring environmental conservation while progressing amid the climate change crisis. Maharashtra, too, is addressing climate change while continuing on its path of development. There are numerous opportunities for Canada to invest in Maharashtra," Mr. Fadnavis said.

## TH CROSSWORD + 14730

(set by KrisKross)

Solve this puzzle online and access more puzzles at *https://thehindu.com/crosswords*

SCAN TO PLAY



**Across**

**1** European rule about controlling disorder (8)
**5** Make bile go away (6)
**9** Think of subordinate - one tense and worried (8)
**10** Most safe to consume English drink (6)
**12** Fully renovated hotel hit by onset of tempest (2,3,4)
**13** Feel sorry for killing river bird (5)
**14** Infection from dust? Yes (4)
**16** Drive around short mountain to reach green light (2-5)
**19** Ponder about complex part of maths equation (7)
**21** Box daughter lost in hut (4)
**24** Joseph's eldest son, universe's saviour primarily! (5)
**25** General requests drop of alcohol to be avoided in ship, tossing and turning (9)
**27** Screen in the auditorium is an electronic device (6)
**28** Duke dies sadly, having personal problem (8)
**29** Lives with bigoted people, shunning society (6)
**30** So hot... under fan for cover (8)

**Down**

**1** Say aloud: "Replace power with time in formula" (6)
**2** Powerful man scores four - cutting square finally (6)
**3** Salt damaged retina, mostly (5)
**4** On both sides of compound, raise deciduous trees initially (7)
**6** Report describing old, more explosive missile (9)
**7** Popular one-time singer? (8)
**8** Following program, party leader leaving at 6 p.m. say (8)
**11** Men only raise guns (4)
**15** Coach losing one football, say, in ship (9)
**17** Son's boring project - going through tome, struggling to get the perfect word (3,5)
**18** After endless suffering, collapse near India's capital (8)
**20** Run a little (4)
**21** Rest of German song now remixed (3-4)
**22** Come running to welcome team in country (6)
**23** Section of most endearing city (6)
**26** Energy drink made from fruit (5)

## SUDOKU

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 3 | | 7 | | 2 | | |
| | | | | 3 | 6 | | 7 | |
| | | 7 | 2 | | 4 | | 3 | |
| 8 | | | 9 | | | | | 2 |
| 9 | | | | 1 | | | | 7 |
| 4 | | | | | 3 | | | 9 |
| | 8 | | 1 | | 2 | 6 | | |
| | 1 | | 6 | 5 | | | | |
| | | 6 | | 8 | | 9 | | |

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

**Solution to previous puzzle**

**Solution to yesterday's Sudoku**

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 9 | 6 | 3 | 8 | 2 |
| 8 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 9 | 7 |
| 7 | 9 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 6 |
| 4 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 9 | 7 | 2 | 8 |
| 6 | 5 | 7 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 9 | 1 | 3 |
| 9 | 2 | 8 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 5 |
| 2 | 7 | 5 | 9 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 6 | 1 |
| 3 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 7 | 9 |
| 1 | 8 | 9 | 6 | 2 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 4 |

## FAITH

### Seek moksha

Different people have different desires, and there are devatas who can grant them their wishes, said Valayapet Ramachariar in a discourse. Those who want their *indriyas* to function well propitiate Indra. Those who want wealth pray to Maya Devi, says *Srimad Bhagavatam*. While some people interpret this as a reference to Durga Devi, it can be taken as a reference to Mahalakshmi. There is a form of Lakshmi known as *adhikararchai*. When there is a separate shrine for Lakshmi in a temple, then we can pray to the Goddess enshrined there for wealth and worldly pleasures. One who wants grains in plenty should pray to Aditi. One prays to Varuna for riches. For good marital relations, one should pray to Uma, the consort of Lord Siva. For knowledge, one prays to Girisha. But if we keep praying for such things, when will we think of moksha? For moksha, we must pray to Lord Narayana, for He alone is capable of granting moksha.

When a person's life ends, the atma can take a path to *svarga* or the path to *Sri Vaikuntha*. The path to *svarga* is called *dumadi marga*. It is the path of darkness. We generally conceptualise *svarga* as a place of eternal happiness and pleasures. The truth is that the duration of our stay in *svarga* is proportional to our merits. Once our *punyas* are exhausted, we have to leave *svarga* and take birth again. So *svarga* does not save us from repeated birth, death and all the ills of worldly life. The path that the atma takes to reach *Sri Vaikuntha* is called *archiradi marga*. This is the path of light. And once we reach *Sri Vaikuntha*, our stay there is forever. No more births, deaths and involvement in the never-ending cycle of *samsara*.

# Precious metals recover from early Feb. lows

**B. Krishnakumar**

The precious metal price staged a recovery off the lows recorded in early February. The recovery was primarily fuelled by the uncertainty over U.S. President Donald Trump's tariff plans. The lower-than-expected U.S. GDP data also helped bolster sentiment towards precious metals. The lingering geopolitical tension in Iran also helped the cause.

Comex gold managed to claw its way back above the psychological $5,000-mark and settled at $5,296.4 by the end of February. This represents a 7.92% gain last month.

The price action in Comex silver was no different to that of gold with the white metal posting a 10.72% gain in February to settle at $94.38 per ounce.

Mirroring the trend in the global markets, the MCX Gold price also recovered off the lows recorded earlier last month. MCX gold closed at ₹1,61,971 per 10-grams at the end of February, representing a 7.37% gain.

Unlike gold, MCX silver closed on a weak note in February. The white metal price closed 8.96% lower last month to settle at ₹2,81,990 per kilogram.

As anticipated last month, precious metals price remained range-bound and was confined to $4,400-$5,650 mentioned last month. While the long-term trend remains positive, the gold price is may still spend some time in this range before the long-term uptrend reasserts. Only a drop below

$4,400 would be a cause of concern for the validity of the long-term uptrend. On the upside, the next major target is at $5,650-$5,700 for comex gold.

Similar to gold, comex silver price too was confined within the $75-$110 range mentioned last month. This range-bound price action is likely to persist until there is a clear breakout from this range. The long-term trend remains positive and the next major target for silver is $125-$135.

**Domestic market**

In the domestic market too, gold price was stuck in the ₹1,45,000-₹1,90,000 range mentioned last month.

Expect volatile back and forth movement within this zone to persist for the next few weeks. Though the long-term trend is still positive, the price has to breakout above ₹1,91,000 to trigger the move to the next target of ₹2,05,000-₹2,10,000.

MCX silver also was confined to the ₹2,40,000-₹3,85,000 zone that was mentioned last month. This range-bound price action is likely to continue in the near term. Only a breakout from the extremes of this zone would set the tone for the next big directional move. Until then expect volatile price action within this broad zone. The long-term target for silver is ₹3,95,000-₹4,15,000. The positive long-term view would be invalidated if the price falls below ₹2,30,000.

To summarise, both gold and silver have cooled off from overbought zone. The price action is likely to be confined to a broad trading range for the next several weeks.

*(The author is a Chennai based analyst/trader. The views and opinion featured in this column is based on the analysis of short-term price movement in gold and silver futures at COMEX & Multi Commodity Exchange of India. This is not meant to be a trading or investment advice)*

**Send queries** on personal finance and investing to the moneywise@thehindu.co.in ID. Our experts in personal finance will respond to select queries, but will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund, share or fixed deposit.

Arbitrage funds are a category of hybrid mutual funds that seek to generate returns from short-lived price differences. GETTYIMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

# Arbitrage funds: Profiting from price gaps in volatile market

Volatility is often equated with risk. Yet for arbitrage funds, turbulent markets can briefly expand price spreads, creating opportunities without taking directional bets

FUND FOCUS

**Vaishali R Venkat**

The next time you place an order to buy or sell a stock through your demat account, just pause and take a moment to glance at its price on the two exchanges – the National Stock Exchange (NSE) and the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE). You might be surprised to find that the same stock is trading a few paise cheaper on one exchange than the other at that very moment, though not always. Thanks to the constant play of demand and supply.

The price gap is often so negligible that most investors barely notice it or ignore. For seasoned traders, however, such fleeting price mismatches can hint at something more: perhaps an 'arbitrage' opportunity, waiting to be captured. What an ordinary investor brushes past as just another volatile phase of the market, a veteran trader may see as a chance to lock in a small, calculated profit.

> When markets are volatile, the likelihood of price mismatches or gaps across exchanges or between the spot and the derivatives markets tends to increase

**What is arbitrage?**

To put it simply, the term arbitrage refers to the practice of capturing profit from price gaps, in the same asset (such as a stock) in two different markets or financial instruments. It involves a dual transaction of buying at a lower price and selling at a higher price at nearly the same time, thereby taking advantage of the spread between the prices. Since the trades are executed at nearly the same time, the arbitrage strategy does not rely on market predictions.

Arbitrage funds are a category of hybrid mutual funds that seek to generate returns from these short-lived price differences. Market watchdog Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) classifies arbitrage funds as equity-oriented funds and requires them to maintain at least 65% gross exposure to equities or equity-related securities. The unutilised portions of the portfolio are often invested in short-term debt or money-market instruments to manage liquidity and optimise overall returns.

Instead of attempting to predict the future direction of the market, whether bullish or bearish, arbitrage fund managers try to take advantage of the temporary price spreads in the same asset across markets or across instruments.

Arbitrage fund managers systematically buy a stock in the cash (spot) market at a lower price and sell its corresponding Futures contract in the derivatives market at a higher price. Alternatively, they may exploit small price differences across exchanges by buying a stock on the NSE and selling the same stock on the BSE, or vice versa. By executing numerous such trades, they try to generate relatively steady returns.

> Arbitrage funds offer a market-linked, more flexible alternative with anytime redemption and generally no premature-withdrawal penalties

**Why volatility matters?**

Manikandan Chandran, researcher and founder of Wincredible Technologies, says, "When markets are volatile, the likelihood of price mismatches or gaps across exchanges or between the spot and the derivatives markets tends to increase. When prices move in a jiffy, fleeting gaps emerge, creating opportunities for arbitrage trades." He says that in relatively calm or sideways markets, such differences may be smaller or vanish more quickly, leaving only limited spreads or sometimes none at all.

Though arbitrage funds use hedged positions to reduce reliance on predicting market trends, they are not entirely risk-free. Their returns depend largely on the availability of pricing gaps, which can vary with market conditions and may sometimes be scarce or absent altogether. At times when spreads (price gaps) are narrow or opportunities are scarce, returns may be modest.

Short-term fluctuations may also occur if trades are not executed at the expected prices, if market liquidity is limited, or because of transaction costs. As a result, arbitrage funds are generally not viewed as high-growth strategies but are instead considered to offer relatively stable, moderate returns.

**Who can invest?**

Arbitrage funds are generally considered suitable for investors seeking relatively stable returns without involving in market predictions.

They are often considered during uncertain or volatile market phases, when pricing gaps may arise more frequently. However, investors aiming for aggressive long-term growth or wealth creation may find these funds less suitable, as the strategy is not designed to deliver high equity-style growth.

Researcher Manikandan says that with most long-running arbitrage funds delivering about 6%-7% annualised returns on an average since inception, the category has historically behaved as a moderate, low-volatility return option rather than a high-growth equity strategy.

"Though FDs or RDs deliver similar returns, arbitrage funds offer a market-linked, more flexible alternative with easier anytime redemption and generally no premature-withdrawal penalties," says Manikandan.

Markets are rarely perfectly aligned. Prices flicker, spreads appear and disappear, and in those brief moments of imbalance lie quiet possibilities. Arbitrage funds are designed to work within that space.

*(The writer is an NISM & CRISIL-certified Wealth Manager and certified in NISM's Research Analyst module)*

# Rebalancing scenarios and rules

THINKINVESTOR

You should reduce equity allocation as you approach the time horizon for the goal; your equity investments are exposed to the risk of losing unrealised gains

**Venkatesh Bangaruswamy**

Previously in this column, we discussed the importance of rebalancing of goal-based portfolios. In this article, we lay out two scenarios that require rebalancing and briefly recap the rules for each scenario.

**Why rebalance?**

Rebalancing is the process of changing the asset allocation of your goal-based portfolios. Suppose you create your child's education portfolio with an initial asset allocation of 60% equity and 40% bonds with a time horizon of 12 years. To keep the portfolio simple, let us suppose you invest in an ETF for your equity allocation and in bank recurring deposit for your bond allocation. So, the volatility in the portfolio's returns can be primarily attributed to the equity allocation.

There are two reasons why rebalancing of this portfolio is important. One, you should reduce your equity allocation as you approach the time horizon for the goal. This is because any negative return in the equity market during the years approaching the goal can have a significant impact on your portfolio value and, therefore, on your life goal.

As a rule, for any life goal other than your retirement portfolio, it is best to apply the rebalancing process starting five years from the end of the time horizon for the goal. And two, your equity investments are exposed to the risk of losing unrealised gains.

Rebalancing can help you moderate this risk. The rebalancing rule can be determined thus: Arrive at a threshold return, which is one percentage point plus the expected pre-tax return on equity investments. When the actual return is greater than the threshold return, rebalance to the extent of the actual return less the pre-tax expected return. The rule for rebalancing is different for the two scenarios. But you may not have to rebalance every year, as you must trade-off two factors- the tax liability (typically, long-term capital gains tax) of rebalancing and the portfolio's risk if not rebalanced. Note that the rebalancing rule for the second scenario already considers the tax liability by creating a threshold return. You could stagger the rebalancing process to reduce the tax liability for the first scenario. Here's how: If two goal-based portfolios have entered the zone of rebalancing (five years discussed above), you may choose to rebalance one portfolio this year and the other the next year, depending on each portfolios' excess returns. The objective is to make optimal use of any annual exemption limit applicable for long-term capital gains.

*(The author offers training programmes for individuals to manage their personal investments)*

## Personal Loans

| Rates and Charges | | Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years | Loan amount 1 lakh Tenure 5 years | (% of loan amount) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Name of Lender** | **Interest Rate (%)** | **EMI (Rs)** | **EMI (Rs)** | **Processing fee** |
| HDFC Bank | 9.99 onwards | 10,621 onwards | 2,124 onwards | Up to Rs 6,500 |
| Tata Capital | 10.99 onwards | 10,869 onwards | 2,174 onwards | Up to 3.5% |
| State Bank of India | 10.00-15.00 | 10,624-11,895 | 2,125-2,379 | Up to 1.50% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 15,000) |
| ICICI Bank | 9.99 onwards | 10,621 onwards | 2,124 onwards | Up to 2% |
| Bank of Baroda* | 10.15-18.05 | 10,660-12,710 | 2,132-2,542 | Up to 2% (Max. Rs 10,000) |
| Axis Bank | 9.50 onwards | 10,501 onwards | 2,100 onwards | Up to 2% |
| Kotak Mahindra Bank | 10.99 onwards | 10,869 onwards | 2,174 onwards | Up to 5% |
| Bank of India | 10.85-16.15 | 10,834-12,199 | 2,167-2,440 | Up to 1% (Min. Rs 250; Max. Rs 15,000) |
| Canara Bank | 9.70-15.15 | 10,550-11.934 | 2,110-2,387 | 0.50% (Rs 1,000 - Rs 5,000) |
| Punjab National Bank | 10.25-16.80 | 10,685-12,373 | 2,137-2,475 | Up to 1% |
| HSBC Bank | 9.95 onwards | 10,611 onwards | 2,122 onwards | Up to 2% |
| Federal Bank | 11.75 - 18.99 | 11,059 - 12,968 | 2,212 - 2,594 | Up to 3% |
| Union Bank of India | 8.75 - 12.55 | 10,319-11,262 | 2,064-2,252 | Up to 1% (Max. Rs 7,500) |
| Bajaj Finserv | 10.00-30.00 | 10,624-16,177 | 2,125-3,235 | Up to 3.93% |
| Punjab & Sind Bank | 9.60-13.85 | 10,525-11,595 | 2,105-2,319 | 0.50%-1% |
| Indian Overseas Bank | 10.25 onwards | 10,685 onwards | 2,137 onwards | Up to 0.75% |
| UCO Bank | 9.95 - 13.20 | 10,611-11,428 | 2,122-2,286 | Up to 1% (Min. Rs 750) |
| IDFC FIRST Bank | 9.99 onwards | 10,621 onwards | 2,124 onwards | Up to 3.5% |
| Bank of Maharashtra | 8.75-13.55 | 10,319-11,518 | 2,064-2,304 | Up to 1% (Max. Rs 10,000) |
| Central Bank of India | 9.85-11.65 | 10,587-11,034 | 2,117-2,207 | Up to 1% |
| IndusInd Bank | 10.49 onwards | 10,744 onwards | 2,149 onwards | Up to 3.5% (2% for instant personal loans for limited period) |

*Interest concession of 0.10% to customers opting for group credit life insurance.

## Car Loans

| Rates and Charges | | Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years | (% of loan amount) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Name of Lender** | **Interest Rate (%)** | **EMI (Rs)** | **Processing fee** |
| Union Bank of India | 7.40-9.45 | 9,995 - 10,489 | Up to Rs 1,000 |
| Punjab National Bank | 7.55-10.70 | 10,031 - 10,797 | Up to 0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 1,500) |
| Bank of Baroda | 7.60 - 11.35 | 10,043 - 10,959 | Up to Rs. 2,000 |
| Canara Bank | 7.45-11.45 | 10,007 - 10,984 | 0.25% ( Rs 1,000 - Rs 5,000) |
| Bank of India | 7.60-12.55 | 10,043 - 11,262 | Up to 0.25% (Rs. 2,500 - Rs. 10,000) |
| UCO Bank | 7.35-10.00 | 9,983 - 10,624 | 0.5% (Max. Rs 5,000) |
| State Bank of India | 8.90 - 9.85 | 10,355 - 10,587 | Rs 750 - Rs 1,500 |
| Bank of Maharashtra* | 7.45-11.75 | 10,007 - 11,059 | NIL |
| Indian Overseas Bank | 7.55-12.00 | 10,031 - 11,122 | NIL |
| ICICI Bank | 8.50 onwards | 10,258 onwards | Up to 2% |
| HDFC Bank | 8.20 onwards | 10,186 onwards | Up to 0.5% (Rs. 3,500 - Rs. 8,000) |
| Karnataka Bank | 8.00-11.50 | 10,138 - 10,996 | Up to 0.60% (Rs. 2,500 - Rs. 11,000) |
| Federal Bank | 8.25 onwards | 10,198 onwards | Rs. 2,000 - Rs. 4,500 |
| Punjab and Sind Bank** | 7.50-14.00 | 10,019 - 11,634 | 0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 15,000) |
| Indian Bank | 7.50-9.55 | 10,019 - 10,513 | Rs. 1,200 |
| IDFC FIRST Bank | 9.99 onwards | 10,621 onwards | Up to Rs. 10,000 |
| Central Bank of India | 7.60-9.20 | 10,043 - 10,428 | No processing fees till 31.03.2026 |

*0.25% interest rate concession for home loan borrowers/other customers with at least 6 months relationship with bank
**Concession of up to 50% on processing fee for PSB Apna Vahan Sugam

**Rates and charges as on February 25**

**Source: Paisabazaar.com**

TEHRAN

## Thousands gather in Iran's capital, mourning Supreme Leader's death

AP

Thousands gathered in the centre of Tehran, on Sunday, mourning Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's death. The mourners, dressed mostly in black and some crying, chanted "death to America" and "death to Israel" in Revolution Square, with many waving Iran's flags and holding photos of Khamenei. AFP

BEIRUT

## Lebanon's Hezbollah vows to 'confront aggression' of U.S., Israel

REUTERS

Lebanese militant group Hezbollah vowed on Sunday to confront the U.S. and Israel over their strikes on the group's key backer Iran. "We will undertake our duty of confronting the aggression," Hezbollah chief Naim Qassem said in a statement, adding that his movement would not leave "the field of honour and resistance". AFP

MOSCOW

## Putin calls Khamenei's killing 'cynical violation' of 'morality

AFP

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sunday slammed the United States and Israel's killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as a "cynical violation" of morality and law. Russian Foreign Ministry called for "an immediate de-escalation, a cessation of hostilities, and a return to political and diplomatic process". AFP

KABUL

## Thwarted Pak. air strike attempt on Bagram Air Base: Afghanistan

AP

Afghanistan said on Sunday it had thwarted attempted air strikes on Bagram Air Base, the former U.S. military base north of Kabul, while cross-border fighting between Pakistan and Afghanistan stretched into a fourth day. The statement said Afghan forces responded with "anti-aircraft and missile defence systems". AP

# Iran strikes on Israel kill 9; three U.S. service members dead, 5 hurt

Iran's Revolutionary Guards launch large-scale attack, causing explosions in Riyadh, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha, Manama, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, with Saudi Arabia intercepting missiles; Pentagon denies Iran's claim of striking *USS Abraham Lincoln*

**Agence France-Presse**
**Reuters**
DUBAI

Iran strikes on Israel killed at least nine persons and left 11 missing in the city of Beit Shemesh on Sunday, first responders said, as Iran vowed revenge after the killing of its Supreme Leader. Another 28 were wounded, the Magen David Adom emergency service said. The police said there was a direct hit on a building.

Three members of the U.S. military have been killed and five others seriously wounded in the operation against Iran, the Pentagon said on Sunday, announcing the first American deaths in the U.S.-Israeli campaign.

**Slipping past Dome:** An explosion caused by a projectile impact after Iran launched missiles into Israel, in Tel Aviv. REUTERS

Iran's Revolutionary Guards announced a "large-scale" attack on Sunday, and blasts were heard in Riyadh, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha, Manama, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian declared Khamenei's killing a "declaration of war against Muslims" and warned: "Iran considers it its legitimate duty and right to avenge the perpetrators and masterminds of this historic crime."

U.S. defence systems intercepted at least two drones over the city of Erbil in northern Iraq, as sirens sounded from the American consulate.

Saudi Arabia intercepted Iranian missiles targeting Riyadh's international airport and the Prince Sultan Airbase, which houses U.S. military personnel, a Gulf source said, adding that the interception did not disrupt navigation or cause any human or material losses. Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Manama airports were also targeted by attacks.

Meanwhile, The Pentagon denied Iran's claim to have struck the aircraft carrier *USS Abraham Lincoln* with ballistic missiles in the Gulf. "The Lincoln was not hit. The missiles launched didn't even come close," U.S. Central Command said on X.

Elsewhere, OPEC+ agreed a modest oil output boost of 2,06,000 barrels per day for April as the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran disrupted oil flows.

# At least 22 killed, over 120 hurt in protests across Pak.

**Associated Press**
KARACHI

Violent clashes between protesters and security forces in Pakistan's port city of Karachi and in the country's north on Sunday left at least 22 people dead and more than 120 others injured in pro-Iran demonstrations, authorities said.

At least 10 people were killed in firing in Karachi when protesters tried to storm the U.S. Consulate in the port city. Police said that at least 40 people were also wounded in the clashes and some of them were in critical condition.

Twelve people were killed and over 80 wounded in clashes with police in the northern Gilgit-Baltistan region when thousands of Shia protesters attacked the offices of the UN Military Observer Group and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), local police official Asghar Ali said.

Protesters engaging in a clash with security forces outside the U.S. Consulate in Karachi, Pakistan on Sunday. REUTERS

The U.S. Embassy in Islamabad said it is monitoring reports of ongoing demonstrations even as Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi requested the citizens not to take the law into their hands, and "record protest peacefully".

Meanwhile, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was a "violation" of international law.

President Asif Ali Zardari also expressed his "profound sorrow over the martyrdom of Khamenei" and conveyed his condolences to Iran.

# As Rubio drives Trump's war agenda, Vance and MAGA base are confused

NEWS ANALYSIS

**Varghese K. George**

U.S. Vice-President J.D. Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio represent different worldviews within the Make America Great Again (MAGA) universe, though both present their politics in terms of Christian civilisational nationalism. A fundamental principle of MAGA politics has been an opposition to America's "endless wars" – the phrase Mr. Trump deployed in three consecutive election campaigns.

In his 2025 inaugural address, he declared that the power of the U.S. "will stop all wars and bring a new spirit of unity to a world that has been angry, violent and totally unpredictable". Mr. Trump touted not starting a new war as a big achievement of his first term. Mr. Vance is a MAGA native on the war question, while Mr. Rubio was a late, reluctant convert. The new American war in West Asia marks an eclipse of Mr. Vance and the prominence of Mr. Rubio. The MAGA base lay scattered and orphaned as their messiah, Mr. Trump, has himself abandoned the flock and joined the pipers of war.

Donald Trump with J.D. Vance, left, and Marco Rubio during the inaugural meeting of the Board of Peace in Washington. AFP

### Two visions

The distinction between the visions of Mr. Vance and Mr. Rubio is most legible in their Munich Security Conference (MSC) speeches, separated by one year. In February 2025, Mr. Vance chided European leaders for abandoning and turning against their own people. Mr. Vance has always focused on repairing the internal strife within Christian societies and reclaiming them from godless globalist liberals.

In Mr. Vance's worldview, the restoration of nationalism is an internal process for each country to undertake, and the U.S. must look within and restore itself rather than get involved in any other region or country, regardless of how strong the moral case could be. Russia, in the Vance side of the MAGA worldview, is a civilisational ally, not an adversary.

Mr. Rubio arrived at the same podium a year later, in February 2026, and inhabited a different universe entirely. Mr. Rubio always considered the Christian mission as a global enterprise to be helmed by the West. "We are part of one civilization – Western civilization," Mr. Rubio declared at the MSC.

For five centuries until 1945, he said, the West had been expanding. Mr. Rubio echoed MAGA talking points against global institutions, the decline of mass manufacturing, and mass migration in the West, but his speech stood in stark contrast to Mr. Vance's on the emphasis of rectification.

For Mr. Rubio, all of Western Europe and the U.S. are united by heritage; he overlooks the internal divisions that Mr. Vance underscores for repair.

Mr. Vance's speech stunned the European ruling elite in the room, while Mr. Rubio earned applause. Soon after the war trumpets blew against Iran, European governments found in Mr. Rubio's civilisational framing a more congenial foundation on which to rally behind the Trump administration's new war.

Mr. Rubio's MSC speech blended MAGA talking points with neoconservative priorities and the preoccupations of European establishment leaders, packaging it in the idiom that Mr. Trump finds instinctively appealing. The UN, he said, was "powerless to constrain the nuclear programme of radical Shia clerics in Tehran," and it took bombing ordered by Mr. Trump. Mr. Rubio did not believe America's wars were a mistake. He believed they were mismanaged. Mr. Vance had found in Mr. Trump a vehicle for the culture war he had theorised: the working class abandoned by liberal elites, communities hollowed out, faith mocked. His anti-interventionism was always a consequence of this worldview. For a while, the contradiction between the two coexisted inside the same administration. Mr. Trump's campaign had cast him as the peace candidate.

### Neocon project

The war against Iran has ended the ambiguity. A war against Iran was always the neoconservative project – the final item on a checklist that began in Afghanistan, continued in Iraq, detoured through Libya and Syria, and always had Tehran as its terminus. The architects of that project were never really gone. They regrouped, rebranded and waited. Mr. Rubio had not converted himself to the MAGA slogans he professed for the crowd, it turns out. He has instead converted the MAGA messiah himself –Mr. Trump, no less.

MAGA's anti-war base is orphaned. Former Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene, one of Mr. Trump's most loyal campaigners, put it with characteristic bluntness, when the war was about to begin: "[F]or some unknown reason, Trump has joined the neocons and will soon go to war against Iran. End of MAGA."

The call for internal restoration, and the liberation of the Christian nation from globalists as preached at MAGA pulpits, are now muffled under the renewed campaign for global civilisational dominance that Mr. Rubio spoke about in Munich. The flock has been told, by the man it trusted most, that it was wrong about what he believed.

THE HINDU GROUP

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A BG-BGE

DAY OF DAYS

## India set to make record-equalling sixth appearance in T20 WC semis

K.R. DEEPAK

India has reached the T20 World Cup semifinals for a record-equalling sixth time. The Men in Blue had also made it to the last-four stage in 2007, 2014, 2016, 2022 and 2024. Meanwhile, India on Sunday recorded its highest successful chase in the marquee tournament. It was also the third-best overall.

MAXIMUM IMPACT

## Powell becomes first Windies cricketer to hit 150 T20I sixes

K.R. DEEPAK

Rovman Powell, who scored an unbeaten 34 on Sunday, became the first West Indian to reach the landmark of 150 sixes in T20Is. He achieved it in his 103rd innings and overtook Nicholas Pooran, who smacked 149 sixes in 97 innings. With 2,261 runs, Powell is Windies' second-highest run-getter in the format behind Pooran (2,275 runs).

FORGETTABLE ENDING

## Jayasuriya decides to step down as Sri Lanka's head coach

AP

Sanath Jayasuriya has decided to step down as Sri Lanka's head coach in the wake of the team's abysmal performance in the T20 World Cup. "My contract ends in June but I will go before that. I will talk to Sri Lanka Cricket about my decision to step down," Jayasuriya said after Sri Lanka lost all three Super Eight matches.

STRANDED

## No clarity on travel plans, says Zimbabwe coach Sammons

B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

In the wake of the Iran-Israel conflict that has led to the shutting of the airspace over the Middle-East, Zimbabwe head coach Justin Sammons said the team is awaiting clarity on its travel plans to return home after its exit from the T20 World Cup on Sunday. "We haven't heard anything yet," Sammons said in New Delhi.

# Samson delivers at the crunch as India enters semis

The opener's unbeaten 50-ball 97 guides the Men in Blue past Windies in a final-over finish; Holder's all-round effort not enough for the Caribbean side; the host sets up a last-four clash with England

T20 WORLD CUP

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
KOLKATA

Sanju Samson (97 n.o.) was the spine as India held its nerve on a Sunday of delight at the Eden Gardens. The Men in Blue defeated the West Indies by five wickets in the ICC T20 Super Eight Group 1 match and sealed their semifinal berth. Chasing the visitor's 195 for four, India finished with 199 for five in 19.2 overs.

Once India commenced its pursuit, Abhishek Sharma guided a four off Akeal Hosein. Samson cut loose against the left-arm spinner, picking a four, slog-sweeping a six, and yet the host was soon in a spot of bother.

**Vital stand**

Both Abhishek and Ishan Kishan holed out in the deep and Shimron Hetmyer, the fielder, revealed safe hands.

At 41 for two, the defending champion needed an alliance and Samson and Suryakumar Yadav stitched one worth 58. Samson carved his fifty and his skipper flicked a six off Jason Holder.

However, Suryakumar found Sherfane Rutherford on the fence. Samson battled on, often finding the fence, and Tilak Varma gave him support. The two played along the turf, a Shamar Joseph over yielded a bouquet of fours, and Tilak launched Roston Chase into the stands.

Just as India seemed to be in the hunt, Tilak failed to get past Hetmyer. It boiled down to 50 from 30, but Hardik Pandya and Shivam Dube did their bit and fittingly Samson hit the winning runs. He slumped into the turf with arms aloft. It was a moment that encapsulated relief and ecstasy. Earlier, Suryakumar won the toss, elected to field and found an adhesive quality in the West Indies openers Shai Hope and Chase.

**Shifting gears**

Skipper Hope led the charts with a six and four off Hardik. Chase too shifted gears with a four off Arshdeep Singh.

A drive was also essayed, and when Jasprit Bumrah steamed in, he was reverse scooped.

Hardik was whipped for six and just as Chase accelerated, Varun Chakaravarthy castled Hope.

West Indies had 68, and Hetmyer swatted two sixes, one each off Hardik and Varun.

**Quick wickets**

Bumrah then lured an edge from Hetmyer and forced Chase into a miscued shot. And Hardik prised out Rutherford as West Indies lost some momentum.

But Rovman Powell and Holder had other ideas. The duo's unbeaten 76 runs partnership was built upon mighty sixes. The West Indies had indeed gained a combative score but Samson owned the night. Now England awaits India at Mumbai on Thursday.

**Sensational stuff:** Samson thanks the heavens after his sublime innings sealed India's semifinal berth. K.R. DEEPAK

SCOREBOARD

**WEST INDIES**

Shai Hope b Varun 32 *(33b, 3x4, 1x6)*, Roston Chase c Suryakumar b Bumrah 40 *(25b, 5x4, 1x6)*, Shimron Hetmyer c Samson b Bumrah 27 *(12b, 1x4, 2x6)*, Sherfane Rutherford c Samson b Hardik 14 *(9b, 1x6)*, Rovman Powell (not out) 34 *(19b, 3x4, 2x6)*, Jason Holder (not out) 37 *(22b, 2x4, 3x6)*; Extras (lb-1, w-10): 11; Total (for four wkts. in 20 overs): 195.

**FALL OF WICKETS**

1-68 (Hope, 8.5 overs), 2-102 (Hetmyer, 11.3), 3-103 (Chase, 11.5), 4-119 (Rutherford, 14.1).

**INDIA BOWLING**

Arshdeep 4-0-43-0, Hardik 4-0-40-1, Axar 4-0-35-0, Bumrah 4-0-36-2, Varun 4-0-40-1.

**INDIA**

Abhishek Sharma c Hetmyer b Hosein 10 *(11b, 2x4)*, Sanju Samson (not out) 97 *(50b, 12x4, 4x6)*, Ishan Kishan c Hetmyer b Holder 10 *(6b, 2x4)*, Suryakumar Yadav c Rutherford b Joseph 18 *(16b, 1x4, 1x6)*, Tilak Varma c Hetmyer b Holder 27 *(15b, 4x4, 1x6)*, Hardik Pandya c Holder b Joseph 17 *(14b, 2x4)*, Shivam Dube (not out) 8 *(4b, 2x4)*; Extras (lb-5, w-7): 12; Total (for five wkts. in 19.2 overs): 199.

**FALL OF WICKETS**

1-29 (Abhishek, 2.6), 2-41 (Kishan, 4.3), 3-99 (Suryakumar, 10.2), 4-141 (Tilak, 14.4), 5-179 (Hardik, 18.2).

**WEST INDIES BOWLING**

Hosein 2-0-22-1, Forde 3-0-22-0, Holder 4-0-38-2, Motie 2-0-18-0, Shepherd 2.2-0-34-0, Joseph 4-0-42-2, Chase 2-0-18-0.

**Toss:** India; **PoM:** Samson.

*India won by five wickets with four balls to spare.*

# Samson is a world-class player and he paced his innings well: Gambhir

**Wily operator:** Bumrah's double-wicket over pegged the West Indies back. K.R DEEPAK

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
KOLKATA

Gautam Gambhir does know a thing or two about chases. In the 2011 World Cup final against Sri Lanka, he top-scored with a 97 in a winning cause. Cut to the present, in his avatar as the coach, the former India opener was thrilled with another 97, this time scored by Sanju Samson.

"Sanju is a world-class player, he has the experience and he did very well. Even in that game against Zimbabwe he did his part. I didn't think he accelerated, he just paced his innings well here, played smartly. I hope he builds on from here. In Sanju and Ishan Kishan, we have two very good players, who can both bat and keep wickets," Gambhir said.

The coach was quick to stress that the victory against the West Indies in a vital ICC T20 World Cup game, had the hallmark of teamwork: "Sanju scored 97 but we also had Shivam Dube scoring those two fours in the penultimate over. Jasprit Bumrah is our banker, we keep going back to him. In the chase, we never felt we were out of the game."

Asked how the team decides the batting combination and bowling changes, Gambhir said: "It is all about experience, I think data is over-rated, you just figure things, and yes the captain makes his decisions. And in big matches, it all boils down to mental strength."

West Indies skipper Shai Hope also lauded Samson's knock: "It was an A-plus innings. He is an experienced player and he handled the chase well."

Having helmed a reasonably good campaign, Hope said: "Our bowlers did well and we batted deep. Shimron Hetmyer at three was good. Obviously we will analyse why we lost".

## Final Super Eight Table

Q: QUALIFIED

**GROUP 1**

| | M | W | L | NR | PTS | NRR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| South Africa (Q) | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 2.259 |
| India (Q) | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 0.106 |
| West Indies | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0.993 |
| Zimbabwe | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | -3.415 |

**GROUP 2**

| | M | W | L | NR | PTS | NRR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| England (Q) | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 1.096 |
| New Zealand (Q) | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1.390 |
| Pakistan | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | -0.123 |
| Sri Lanka | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | -1.950 |

**THE CLIMACTIC PHASE**

**SEMIFINALS**

- **March 4:** South Africa vs. New Zealand, Kolkata, 7 p.m.
- **March 5:** India vs. England, Mumbai, 7 p.m.

**FINAL: MARCH 8: Ahmedabad, 7 p.m.**

# Team South Africa trumps Raza's brilliance, extends winning run

Vivek Krishnan
NEW DELHI

South Africa's collective might trumped Zimbabwe skipper Sikandar Raza's individual brilliance on a hot Sunday afternoon at the Arun Jaitley Stadium here.

In their final Super Eight Group 1 fixture of the 2026 T20 World Cup, the Proteas chased down 154 with five wickets in hand to maintain their perfect record in the competition. Aiden Markram and Co. will take on New Zealand in the semifinals in Kolkata on Wednesday.

Raza, who will turn 40 in April, was peerless on the day. After hammering 73 off 43 balls, he also snared three scalps with his off-breaks. Having taken the new ball, he induced Quinton de Kock's edge in the very first over, and castled Markram with a ball that kept a tad low in the third over.

When Ryan Rickelton miscued a pull off Brad Evans to Ryan Burl at long-on in the sixth over, South Africa was in a spot of bother at 43 for three.

**Positive intent:** Brevis eased nerves in the South African camp with a match-winning 42 off just 18 balls. R.V. MOORTHY

But Dewald Brevis and David Miller brought a degree of comfort to the chase by adding 50 off 25 balls for the fourth wicket. Brevis' strokes were laced with quintessential flamboyance, smashing as many as four sixes in his 18-ball 42.

While the dismissals of Miller and Brevis in quick succession added a layer of intrigue to the climax, Tristan Stubbs and George Linde ensured there were no further hiccups.

Earlier, Raza was at the front and centre of Zimbabwe's total of 153 for seven. Even as wickets fell frequently at the other end, the 39-year-old continued to play with abandon until his dismissal in the 17th over.

Having walked in to bat when Zimbabwe was 28 for two in the fifth over, he pounced particularly when the South African pacers erred on the shorter side.

He galloped to his half-century off 29 balls, but negligible support from the rest meant it was all in vain.

**The scores:**

Zimbabwe 153/7 in 20 overs (Sikandar Raza 73, Kwena Maphaka 2/21, Corbin Bosch 2/40) lost to South Africa 154/5 in 17.5 overs (Ryan Rickelton 31, Dewald Brevis 42, George Linde 30 n.o., Sikandar Raza 3/29).

**Toss:** Zimbabwe; **PoM:** Raza.

## INBRIEF

### Chennai Super Kings unveils its jersey for IPL 2026

Five-time IPL champion Chennai Super Kings (CSK) unveiled its team jersey for the upcoming Indian Premier League 2026 season on Sunday. Taking to Instagram, CSK posted a video, revealing the jersey, with the caption "ALL-NEW AND ALL FOR YOU! Order the CSK Jersey 2026 and let your summer be filled with Yellove!"

### Bezzecchi rides to victory in season-opening Thailand GP

Marco Bezzecchi won the MotoGP season-opening Grand Prix in Buriram, Thailand from pole position on Sunday, as defending World champion Marc Marquez retired late with a buckled wheel. Aprilia's Bezzecchi led from start to finish while KTM's Pedro Acosta was second and Trackhouse's Raul Fernandez third.

### Takele and Kosgei take the honours in Tokyo Marathon

Ethiopia's Tadese Takele successfully defended his Tokyo Marathon title on Sunday, edging Kenya's Geoffrey Toroitich in a sprint finish to cross the line in 2hr 3min 37sec. Takele finished with the same official time as Toroitich after a dramatic battle for the line, with Kenya's Alexander Mutiso just one second further behind in third place. Kenya's Brigid Kosgei won the women's race in 2:07:28.

### Federico Cina clinches Maha Open ATP Challenger 75

Sixth seed Federico Cina, left, saved five match points to edge past Britain's Felix Gill to win the Maha Open ATP Challenger 75 tennis championship in Pune on Sunday. In a thrilling contest lasting two hours and 29 minutes, Cina held his nerve in the decisive tie-break to prevail 6-3, 5-7, 7-6(1). Cina was awarded a trophy, $17,000 and 75 ATP ranking points, while Gill received a trophy, $9,600 and 40 ranking points.

**LIVE TELECAST**

**Serie A:** DAZN, 11 p.m. & 1.15 a.m. (Tuesday)
**LaLiga**: FanCode, 1.30 a.m. (Tuesday)

# A case of so near and yet so far for a star-studded Karnataka team

The final laid bare two of the southern heavyweight's biggest lacunae — lack of bite when lead spinner Shreyas has an off-day and the pace bowlers' propensity to not be persistent; the unvarnished truth is that there are no easy teams in the premier domestic competition anymore

**RANJI TROPHY**

**N. Sudarshan**
HUBBALLI

Karnataka's 2025-26 Ranji Trophy season at once feels like a success and not so.

If one considers the side's precarious position in the last group-stage match versus Punjab when it nearly failed to qualify for the knockouts, a runner-up finish feels like a bonus.

But there is also a view that a full-strength, star-filled team replete with Test players should have fared better against a first-time finalist.

Regardless of how one sees it, the unvarnished truth is that there are no easy teams in the Ranji Trophy anymore, and pedigreed outfits – like eight-time champion Karnataka – cannot take anyone lightly.

Especially not someone like Jammu & Kashmir, which had recorded outright wins over five past Ranji champions in Delhi, Hyderabad, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bengal.

The final laid bare two of Karnataka's biggest lacunae – the lack of bite when lead spinner Shreyas Gopal has an off-day and the pace bowlers' propensity to not be persistent.

Overall Shreyas had a fine season, with the 48 wickets his best-ever tally in a single edition and the 469 runs he made his third-best. But a bit more bowling support would have done Karnataka a world of good.

Left-arm spinner Shikhar Shetty played eight matches in his debut campaign and took 22 wickets but at an average of 42. Off-spinner Mohsin Khan featured in five and claimed 15 scalps, but six of those wickets came in one innings.

The encouraging fact, however, is that Shikhar is just 20 and Mohsin 22, and both appear very coachable bowlers. It will be a travesty if the land with a great history of spin allows them to drift.

In the pace-bowling department, it was not so much about quality but of methods. Prasidh Krishna, V. Vyshak, Vidwath Kaverappa and the fast-improving Vidyadhar Patil are capable men, but their failure to attack the stumps relentlessly proved their undoing.

"We need to probably show more discipline," coach Yere Goud admitted. "If things are not going our way, can we control the runs? In the second innings [of J & K], we bowled that channel consistently. It's a learning."

The batting may have failed in the title-decider, but it was encouraging on the whole.

R. Smaran, 22, stood out with 950 chart-topping runs while Karun Nair made 699 and Mayank Agarwal 678. K.L. Rahul and Devdutt Padikkal scored 470 and 543 respectively and played match-winning knocks against Mumbai (quarterfinals) and Punjab.

The real test will be when newly appointed captain Padikkal and Rahul are called up for National duty and replacements have to be found.

There is no dearth of talent. But Karnataka's future will be shaped by how well it is harnessed.

#### Top performers in Ranji Trophy (2025-26)

| BATTING | M | INNS | RUNS | HS | AVG | 100s/50s |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| R. Smaran (Kar) | 9 | 14 | 950 | 227* | 86.36 | 4/3 |
| Ayush Doseja (Del) | 7 | 12 | 949 | 209 | 105.44 | 4/5 |
| Sanat Sangwan (Del) | 7 | 14 | 828 | 211* | 69.00 | 3/3 |
| Sudip Kumar Gharami (Ben) | 9 | 14 | 797 | 299 | 56.92 | 3/3 |
| Abhinav Tejrana (Goa) | 7 | 12 | 788 | 205 | 71.63 | 4/2 |
| **BOWLING** | **M** | **INNS** | **WKTS** | **BBI** | **SR** | **5WI** |
| Auqib Nabi (J&K) | 10 | 17 | 60 | 7/24 | 28.43 | 7 |
| Mayank Mishra (Utk) | 8 | 16 | 59 | 6/84 | 38.23 | 4 |
| Shreyas Gopal (Kar) | 10 | 19 | 48 | 8/110 | 49.72 | 2 |
| Siddharth Desai (Guj) | 7 | 14 | 45 | 5/61 | 41.95 | 2 |
| Shahbaz Ahmed (Ben) | 8 | 15 | 39 | 7/56 | 34.71 | 4 |

*Elite Group numbers only*

**Roller-coaster ride:** Karnataka, under new captain Padikkal, came back from the brink only to fall at the final hurdle. K. MURALI KUMAR

# How strength & conditioning coach Sunny 'scouted' J & K's champions

**Tarun Shastry**
CHENNAI

Sunny Verma's designation says he is the strength and conditioning coach of the Jammu and Kashmir cricket team. However, his contribution goes far beyond keeping the players physically match-fit during the cricketing season.

Behind the scenes, he has been instrumental in spotting raw talent in his home district. In an exclusive conversation with the *The Hindu*, Sunny spoke about his approach, the bond he shares with the team members, and how he met players while watching tennis-ball cricket "talent hunts" in Jammu district – the ones who eventually became key members of the victorious Ranji Trophy side that humbled Karnataka in Hubballi on Saturday.

"I used to watch tennis-ball cricket near my village in Jammu, and some of the current squad members were part of those games. That's where I first met Umran [Malik], Yudhvir [Singh], Sunil [Kumar], and a few others," Sunny recalled with a smile. "Watching them, I could see their potential. It's been incredible knowing them from those early days to now, and seeing them be a part of a Ranji Trophy-winning team. We all share an amazing rapport," added the 33-year-old.

**Pillar of support:** Sunny, right, with Dogra during a training session. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"Everyone has become very professional now. When I came on board, there was a lot of work to do – areas that needed improvement. I sat down with Mithun [Manhas] sir and Ajay [Sharma] sir to discuss how we could develop the team. They brought a wealth of experience from playing at a high level, which helped shape our approach."

Sunny explained how he made J & K an 'unbreakable' unit. "The key is the off-season. During that period, we focus on players' work capacity. The association (JKCA) has been very supportive, providing all the tools we need. Remarkably, over the past two years, no player in the team has suffered a significant injury. Even the NCA acknowledged this achievement," added the BCCI Level-1 certified coach.

"My goal is to make the J&K team the fittest in India. When I joined, I noticed teams like Karnataka had excellent fitness culture, and I wanted our side to reach that level. Over five years, we've developed a culture where players train even in the off-season. I lead all sessions myself, thanks to the strong relationship I share with the boys."

# Chennai Super Kings kick-starts preparation for this season's IPL

**S. Dipak Ragav**
CHENNAI

Chennai Super Kings on Sunday kick-started its pre-season camp ahead of the 19th edition of the Indian Premier League.

The five-time champion is training at the team's High Performance Centre in Navalur under assistant coach Rajiv Kumar and assistant bowling coach S. Sriram.

On Saturday, captain Ruturaj Gaikwad and former skipper M.S. Dhoni arrived in the city.

The other players who have checked in include Ayush Mhatre, Urvil Patel, Mukesh Choudhary, and Prashant Veer.

The current contingent includes only Indian players, with the overseas recruits set to join later this month.

Head coach Stephen Fleming and bowling coach Eric Simons are expected to arrive by March 16. Since its fifth title in 2023 under Dhoni's leadership, CSK has had two forgettable seasons, failing to qualify for the playoffs. While Super Kings narrowly missed out on qualification in 2024, the side finished at the bottom last year, winning just four matches.

Prior to the player auction last year, the Chennai outfit made one of the biggest moves in the trade window, signing wicket-keeper-batter Sanju Samson from Rajasthan Royals. In return, all-rounders Ravindra Jadeja and Sam Curran were traded to Royals.

In that light, 2026 is a pivotal year for the Men in Yellow.

There is heightened speculation that it could be Dhoni's last season as a player.

If that is the case, the team would want to give its icon a fitting farewell.

# Sindhu and coach Irwansyah safe but stranded in Dubai

**Press Trust of India**
NEW DELHI

Indonesian coach Irwansyah Adi Pratama, who trains two-time Olympic medallist P.V. Sindhu, had a narrow escape after an explosion occurred close to where they were stationed at Dubai Airport while travelling to Birmingham for the All England Championships.

Sindhu and Irwansyah were left stranded at Dubai International Airport after flight operations were suspended following escalating tensions in the Middle East. The tournament is scheduled to begin on Tuesday.

A screengrab of Sindhu speaking from the Dubai Airport. PTI

"In Dubai at the moment, flights getting cancelled. There was an explosion in airport, so are stuck here at the moment," Irwansyah said. "They have put us in the hotel, we are okay but again there is a little bit of worry at the same time. We want to go to All England. I hope we can fly out today because Sindhu's match is on Wednesday."

Meanwhile, the BWF said it was closely monitoring the travel challenges along with Badminton England.

Sindhu on Sunday morning detailed the tense moments on social media.

"The ordeal continues to unfold, and the situation is becoming more frightening by the hour. A few hours ago, there was an explosion close to where we were holed up at the airport," she wrote on social media. "My coach had to quickly run out of the area. It was an extremely tense and scary moment."

# Gukesh held by Navara; Aravindh suffers loss

**Press Trust of India**
PRAGUE

D. Gukesh's hunt for a first victory in the Prague International Chess Festival continued as he was held to a draw by David Navara of Czechia in the fourth round.

Jorden van Foreest of Holland nosed ahead of the field with his third victory in four games, while defending champion Aravindh Chithambaram lost to Vincent Keymer of Germany.

**The results (round 4):** Nodirbek Yakubboev (2) lost to Jorden van Foreest (3); D. Gukesh (1.5) drew with David Navara (2.5); David Anton Guijarro (1.5) drew with Nodirbek Abdusattorov (2.5);

Gukesh contemplates a move against Navara. X@PRAGUECHESS

Vincent Keymer (2) bt Aravindh Chithamabaram (1.5); Hans Moke Niemann (1.5) drew with Parham Maghsoodloo (1.5).
**Challengers:** Daniil Yuffa (1.5) bt Jiner Zhu (1); Benjamin Gledura (1.5) bt Joans Buhl Bjerre (2); Jachym Nemec (2.5) drew with Thomas Beerdsen (2.5); Stepn Hrbek (2.5) drew with Surya Shekhar Ganguly (1); Divya Deshmukh (1.5) drew with Finek Vanclav (3).

# Indian squad for FIH Women's World Cup Qualifiers named

**HOCKEY**

**Sports Bureau**
HYDERABAD

Hockey India (HI) on Sunday named a 20-member Indian women's squad for the upcoming FIH Hockey World Cup Qualifiers, scheduled here from March 8 to 14. Midfielder Salima Tete will captain the side.

The tournament will mark the first assignment for the team under returning chief coach Sjoerd Marijne, who took charge earlier this year after replacing Harendra Singh.

Eight teams – host India, England, Scotland, Korea, Italy, Uruguay, Wales and Austria – will battle for three coveted berths at the FIH Hockey World Cup Belgium & Netherlands 2026, set for August.

Salima Tete will lead the team. FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

The teams have been divided into two pools. Pool A features England, Korea, Italy and Austria, while Pool B comprises India, Scotland, Uruguay and Wales.

India will get its World Cup Qualifiers underway against Uruguay on March 8, followed by matches against Scotland on March 9 and Wales on March 11, respectively.

**The squad: Goalkeepers:** Bansari Solanki, Bichu Devi Kharibam; **Defenders:** Sushila Chanu, Nikki Pradhan, Manisha Chauhan, Udita, Ishika Chaudhary. **Midfielders:** Neha, Salima Tete (Capt.), Sunelita Toppo, Sakshi Rana, Vaishnavi Phalke, Rutaja Pisal, Deepika Soreng; **Forwards:** Navneet Kaur, Ishika, Lalremsiami, Beauty Dungdung, Baljeet Kaur, Annu.

**Rising high:** Timber, third left, nods home Arsenal's winner against Chelsea. AFP

# Arsenal keeps five-point lead with a nervy win

Timber's header ensures victory over Chelsea; Yamal hat-trick fires Barcelona to a comfortable win over Villarreal; Atletico edges Oviedo

EURO LEAGUES

**Agence France-Presse**
LONDON

Arsenal reestablished a five-point lead at the top of the Premier League with a 2-1 win over 10-man Chelsea 2-1 on Sunday, while Benjamin Sesko fired Manchester United up to third with victory over Crystal Palace.

Defenders William Saliba and Jurrien Timber got Arsenal's goals.

The Blues could not cope with Arsenal's prowess from corners as Mikel Arteta's men edged closer to a first league title in 22 years.

Earlier on Saturday, Manchester City had closed to within two points of Arsenal with a 1-0 win at Leeds. City still has a game in hand on Arsenal.

Barcelona's teenage star Lamine Yamal scored the first hat-trick of his career in a 4-1 win over Villarreal on Saturday that took the Catalan giant four points clear at the top of La Liga.

Atletico Madrid moved third, level on points with Villarreal, after Julian Alvarez snatched it a 1-0 win at bottom side Real Oviedo.

**The results: Premier League:**
Brighton 2 (Gomez 6, Welbeck 15) bt Nottingham Forest 1 (Gibbs-White 13); Fulham 2 (Wilson 7, Iwobi 34) bt Tottenham 1 (Richarlison 66).
Manchester United 2 (Fernandes 57-pen, Sesko 65) bt Crystal Palace 1 (Lacroix 4); Arsenal 2 (Saliba 21, Timber 66) bt Chelsea 1 (Hincapie 45+2-og).

**Serie A:** Cremonese 0 lost to AC Milan 2 (Pavlovic 90, Leao 90+4); Sassuolo 2 (Kone 23, Thorstvedt 69) bt Atalanta 1 (Musah 88).

**On Saturday: Premier League:**
Burnley 3 (Kayode 45+3-og, Anthony 47, Flemming 60) lost to Brentford 4 (Damsgaard 9, 90+3, Thiago 25, Schade 34).
Liverpool 5 (Ekitike 5, Van Dijk 24, Mac Allister 43, Gakpo 70, Disasi 82-og) bt West Ham 2 (Soucek 49, Castellanos 75).
Newcastle 2 (Ramsey 32, Murphy 82) lost to Everton 3 (Branthwaite 19, Beto 34, Barry 83); Leeds 0 lost to Manchester City 1 (Semenyo 45+2).
**LaLiga:** Barcelona 4 (Yamal 28, 37, 69, Lewandowski 90+1) bt Villarreal 1 (Gueye 49); Real Oviedo 0 lost to Atletico Madrid 1 (Alvarez 90+4).
**Serie A:** Inter Milan 2 (Dimarco 31, Calhanoglu 70-pen) bt Genoa 0; Verona 1 (Akpa Akpro 64) lost to Napoli 2 (Hojlund 2, Lukaku 90+5).
**Bundesliga:** Borussia Dortmund 2 (Schlotterbeck 26, Svensson 83) lost to Bayern Munich 3 (Kane 54, 70-pen, Kimmich 87).
Hoffenheim 0 lost to St. Pauli 1 (Pereira Lage 45+4);
Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Quansah 88) drew with Mainz 1 (Becker 67).

# Chennaiyin, Odisha play out a draw

**Breaking the duck:** Chennaiyin's Brazilian defender Elsinho, centre, scored his first goal in the ISL. X@CHENNAIYINFC

ISL

**Sports Bureau**

Centre-backs Elsinho and Carlos Delgado showed the attackers how to get on the scoresheet as Chennaiyin FC and Odisha FC shared the spoils in the Indian Super League contest at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar on Sunday.

Elsinho and Delgado, picked in the team primarily for their defensive prowess, scored off set-pieces for Chennaiyin and Odisha respectively in the 1-1 stalemate. While CFC opened its account on its third attempt, OFC played out its second successive draw.

Chennaiyin was lucky not to be reduced to 10 men in the 26th minute, when Laldinliana Renthlei, being the last man, brought down Rahim Ali during an Odisha counter-attack. The right-back escaped a send-off after the referee perhaps took into consideration where the foul was committed (close to the halfway line).

The deadlock was broken by Elsinho's pin-point header on the stroke of half-time. Farukh Choudhary delivered a sumptuous corner-kick to pick out the Brazilian, who rose the highest to bag his first goal in Indian football. The piece of Samba magic also enabled Chennaiyin unlock a few firsts – it was the club's maiden goal of the ISL season and the first by an outfield player under head coach Clifford Miranda.

Odisha showed urgency at the start of the second period and went on to level the score through Delgado (68th). The Spanish central defender matched Elsinho's effort, beating his marker Pritam Kotal and heading in a precise cross from Puitea off a free-kick.

Inigo Martin and substitute Imran Khan had golden opportunities to restore the lead for CFC, but both missed from close range. In the end, the teams shook hands with a point each.

**The results:**
**At Bhubaneswar:** Odisha FC 1 (Carlos Delgado 68) drew with Chennaiyin FC 1 (Elsinho 45+2).
**At Mumbai:** Mumbai City 1 (Lallianzuala Chhangte 85) drew with NorthEast United 1 (M.S. Jithin 48).

# Shaina wins bronze at Dutch Jr. Intl.

**Press Trust of India**
NEW DELHI

India's rising shuttler Shaina Manimuthu has secured a bronze medal at the Dutch Junior International.

Shaina, the under-15 girls' champion at the Badminton Asia Championships, saw her impressive run end in the semifinals, where she went down to China's Yi Qing Yin 17-21, 8-21 in 35 minutes.

THE HINDU GROUP

ZIMBABWE'S SECOND COMING

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After missing out in 2024, Zimbabwe clawed through qualifiers and stunned giants in the 2026 T20 World Cup, rediscovering belief and balance.

**Also in this issue:**
Associate nations demand a bigger global stage after near-upsets in the T20 World Cup

Meghana Sajjanar's bronze-winning precision proves resilience can steady even the most delicate aim.

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**Ponmythili Muralidharan**

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# Life lessons from exams

With exam season upon us, an educator reflects on what students actually learn and carry forward from this period of stress

During exam season, certain things repeat themselves in almost every home. A student sitting at the dining table late into the night. A cup of tea gone cold. Notes spread out, not always being read. A parent hovering nearby, unsure whether to speak or stay silent.

From the outside, it looks like stress. From the inside, it feels like learning something that no textbook ever names. During this time, students often answer the same question again and again. "How are you?"

"I'm fine." It is said while tying shoelaces in a hurry, while eating without much appetite, or while stepping out of the exam hall and avoiding eye contact. Often, "I'm fine" means I'm managing.

**Beyond textbooks**

Exams do not only test what students know. They slowly train students to stay with effort. To sit with discomfort without walking away. To return to the same chapter even when confidence dips and motivation feels thin. Many students remember this phase not because of a particular question, but because of how it felt. The heaviness in the chest before an exam. The strange quiet of the hall. The moment of doubt halfway through a paper when the mind goes blank and yet the hand keeps moving. That moment matters.

After the exam, the managing does not stop. Outside the hall, conversations begin quickly. "That question was easy." or "I think the answer is option C." Some students listen and feel unsettled. Some quietly walk away. Some put on earphones even if no music is playing. Choosing not to participate in these conversations takes effort. It is not avoidance. It is self-control, and many students practise it daily during exam season.

Two students can score the same marks and yet come away with very different inner experiences. One may have had reassurance at home, steady encouragement, and the sense that outcomes were not the only thing being watched. Another may have carried unspoken pressure. The fear of letting someone down. The feeling that failure was not an option.

**Manage responsibility**

What exams reveal quietly is not who is smarter, but who learns to carry responsibility early. Most students learn how to manage tiredness. How to keep going even when sleep is patchy and days blur into each other. How to hold their nerves when comparison enters the room through rank lists, coaching centre stories, or a relative's casual comment.

They also learn how to appear fine. Many students become experts at saying "I'm okay" even when they are not. They learn that discipline is admired, but doubt is inconvenient. That calm is appreciated, but questions about fear or fatigue are harder to place. Over time, composure becomes a habit. This is not a weakness. It is an adaptation.

What often makes the difference is whether this effort is seen. When a parent notices persistence instead of only marks, the strain feels meaningful. When effort is invisible, pressure feels heavier than it needs to be.

Most adults can trace something important back to their exam years. The first time they realised they could do something difficult without quitting. The first time, they understood what sustained effort felt like. The first time they learned that clarity does not always come before action, sometimes it comes after. These lessons did not stay in school. They travelled forward.

Many adults forget this. They remember the stress, but not the strength it built. Yet the ability to sit with discomfort, to stay with effort, and to continue without immediate clarity was learned much earlier than they realise. Often, it was first practised during exam season.

**Training ground**

That is why exam pressure should not be spoken about only as suffering. It is also a training ground. Not because pressure is good in itself, but because learning to hold pressure with dignity builds something lasting. Support during exam season does not mean removing difficulty. It means making the difficulty feel held. It shows up in small ways. In reducing unnecessary comparisons, recognising effort even on days when results are unclear, allowing a student to say, "This is hard", without immediately trying to fix it.

Exams will end. Papers will be corrected. Life will move on. What stays is quieter. The memory of having stood in that heat and endured. The knowledge that, even at a young age, one learned to carry responsibility and finish what was started. Later, when life demands rigour again – as it will – something familiar returns. A sense of alignment. 'I have done this before. I have stayed with something difficult before. If I could do it then, I can do it now.' That is what exams do not test, but what students carry forward.

The writer is Junior Faculty Organisation - Behaviour and Human Resource at Great Lakes Institute of Management, Chennai.

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# Healy bows out on a high as Aussies complete sweep

The captain's phenomenal 98-ball 158 and Mooney's unbeaten 106 off 84 deliveries power the team to 409 for seven; World champion India gets bundled out for 224 as the host wins the ODI leg 3-0

**Fairytale farewell:** Healy's knock was studded with 27 fours and two maximums. GETTY IMAGES

INDIA IN AUSTRALIA

**Press Trust of India**
HOBART

Captain Alyssa Healy bid adieu to ODI cricket on a glorious note, smashing a rampaging 158 as Australia whitewashed India 3-0 in the series with a 185-run thrashing of the World champion in the third and final match here on Sunday.

It was a fairytale ODI swansong for the 35-year-old Healy as her 158 and Beth Mooney's unbeaten 106 powered Australia to a mammoth 409 for seven after being asked to bat.

Chasing a massive target of 410, India was all out for 224 in 45.1 overs to lose the three-match series 0-3.

Healy will draw curtains on her illustrious international career after playing the one-off pink-ball Test in Perth against India from Friday.

The 35-year-old has finished with 3,777 runs from 126 ODIs, which includes eight centuries and 19 fifties.

Australia lost Phoebe Litchfield (14) early, but Healy and Georgia Voll (62 off 52) shared 104 runs for the second wicket.

Healy and Mooney then stitched 145 runs for the third wicket to hand Australia a launching pad for the big score.

Healy smashed 27 fours and two maximums in her 98-ball knock.

Voll hit seven fours and one six while Mooney's 84-ball innings was studded with 10 hits to the fence and a six.

For India, Sneh Rana (two for 66) was the most successful bowler while and Shree Charani (two for 106) became only the third to concede 100-plus runs in a women's ODI.

India never really got going in its run chase as it lost wickets at regular intervals.

The in-form Smriti Mandhana departed for a duck in the second over before Pratika Rawal (27 off 21) and Jemimah Rodrigues (42 off 29) added 54 runs for the second wicket.

But the floodgates opened once Pratika departed in the eighth over, caught plumb in front by Annabel Sutherland.

Jemimah was the next to go, caught at short fine-leg by Lucy Hamilton off Ashleigh Gardner.

Harleen Deol (14), too, failed to make any substantial contribution as she was run-out.

Much was expected from skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, but she could only make 25 off 33 balls before being trapped in front by Alana King.

Towards the end, Deepti Sharma (29 off 47) and Sneh (44) added 63 runs for the eighth wicket but that only delayed the inevitable.

Australia now leads the multi-format series 8-4 on points.

**The scores:** Australia 409/7 in 50 overs (Alyssa Healy 158, Georgia Voll 62, Beth Monney 106 n.o.) bt India 224 in 45.1 overs (Jemimah Rodrigues 42, Senh Rana 44, Alana King 4/33).

**Toss:** India; **PoM:** Healy.

## A nice way to sign off in the yellow, says Healy

**Press Trust of India**
HOBART

Skipper Alyssa Healy thanked the cricket gods for an enjoyable farewell as she signed off from the ODIs in style with a blistering 158 that set up Australia's 185 run-win over World champion India in the third and final match here on Sunday.

Healy's 158, combined with Beth Mooney's unbeaten 106, powered Australia to a mammoth 409 for seven. In reply, India could only manage 224 in 45.1 overs.

"I just think what a ridiculous sport we play that it can kick you down to so many times and then give you opportunities like it has today," Healy, who was adjudged Player-of-the-Match, said during the post-match presentation.

"I've hated every milestone match, so today was just an opportunity to go out and enjoy it. And it was, one of the more enjoyable experiences I've had. So thanks to the cricket gods for that. And yeah, that's a nice way to sign off in the yellow."

The wicketkeeper-batter also sent down two overs for 12 runs in her final ODI appearance.

So which was more fun, scoring 158 or bowling? "Oh, bowling for sure. It didn't take much to get talked into either. I heard my name mentioned once and I said right, but just to finish the ODI leg the way we did, yeah makes me really proud. And looking forward to heading to the WACA now and get stuck into the pink-ball (Test in Perth)."

Healy also lauded Mooney's contribution and expressed confidence in the next generation.

"Mooney's been outstanding. The future's bright for our team. I'm looking forward to watching them go about their business over the next couple of years leading into that next one-day World Cup.

"I think they're going to do some fantastic things yet again".

Healy also sent down two overs. GETTY IMAGES

## 'We kept making too many mistakes'

**Press Trust of India**
HOBART

India captain Harmanpreet Kaur admitted her side was outplayed by Australia and pointed to repeated mistakes after losing the three-match series 0-3 here on Sunday.

"Overall we didn't play good cricket. In T20s, we were doing all the things right and in ODIs, we didn't play good cricket. That is something which cost us.

"It's a long game and you have to keep doing the right things again and again. I think we kept making too many mistakes.

"And credit goes to the Australian team also, they really played good cricket and didn't give us a chance to bounce back," she said.

Looking ahead to the one-off Test, Harmanpreet stressed the need to remain positive.

"A lot of learning for us and definitely we will go back and think how we have to go about in ODI cricket. Keeping everybody in good space of mind, I think that is something which is very important," she said.

"I know we have very less time to prepare (for the Test). But I think now it's only about believing in yourself and keeping yourself a good frame of mind and doing the right thing for the team".

**Looking ahead:** Harmanpreet stressed the need to remain positive going into the one-off Test. GETTY IMAGES